The Progressive

June 2015

Police State

FRED MCKISSACK ON BALTIMORE

KEVIN ALEXANDER GRAY FROM SOUTH CAROLINA

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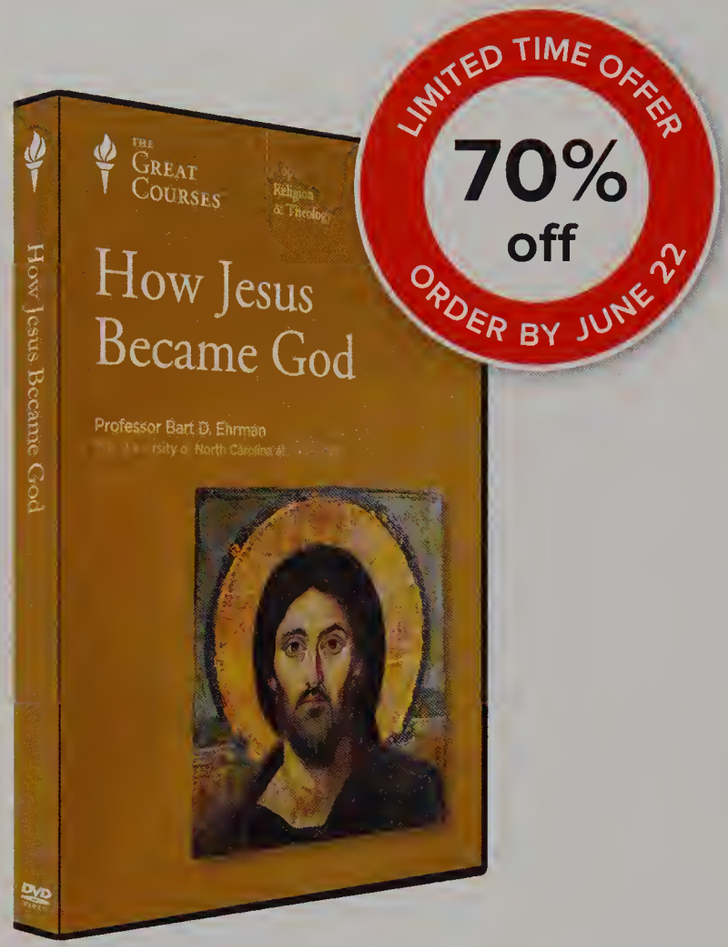

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The Progressive *tackles the forces distorting our economy, corrupting our democracy, and imperiling our planet, and champions peace, civil liberties, equality, and justice.*

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Voices of the Black Spring

Kevin Alexander Gray called our offices just after the terrible video surfaced of Walter Scott being shot in the back, repeatedly, as he fled the police in Gray's home state of South Carolina.

A "snuff film," Gray called that video, and he wondered aloud about the effect of watching the footage over and over, with its deep, disturbing historical associations—of a fleeing slave and pursuing overseer, or a civil rights worker running from the Klan.

GREG ANDERSON

His essay on the subject appears on Page 17. Gray has been in the trenches of the civil-rights struggle for many years. He ran Jesse Jackson's 1988 Presidential campaign in South Carolina, and he is the author of many deeply thoughtful essays and books. We are honored to publish him in *The Progressive.*

Fred McKissack Jr., who wrote the gorgeous personal essay in our December/January issue, "Goodbye, St. Louis," writes our Comment this month, connecting the thirtieth anniversary of the police bombing of the black liberation group MOVE to the police-state tactics used against African Americans today. As Fred filed his piece, residents of Baltimore were celebrating the decision to charge six police officers in the death of Freddie Gray, and across the country people marched for what activists are calling the Black Spring.

David Couper, who back in the 1970s transformed a backward police department in Madison into a more responsive, respectful, and peaceful force, contributes his thoughts on what it takes to make meaningful change in this issue. Today, Couper is worried about the huge escalation in military weaponry and tactics on local forces around the country. On Page 14, he outlines his ideas for reform.

This month we welcome the great editor and investigative reporter Bill Lueders to our staff. Bill is a longtime friend of *The Progressive.* He worked as an intern here under our late, great editor Erwin Knoll, and he wrote the classic biography of Erwin, *Enemy of the State.*

Bill was my editor during his twenty-five years at *Isthmus,* Madison's alternative weekly, where he won dozens of state and national awards. In 2011 he moved to the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism, where he became one of Wisconsin's leading investigative reporters, regularly breaking big stories and writing a weekly column that ran in newspapers all over the state.

We are also delighted to welcome our fantastic new Development Director, Lily Johnson. Lily has been part of our *Progressive* family for many years, as the organizer of Fighting Bob Fest (back when she worked for labor attorney, rabble rouser, and Bob Fest founder Ed Garvey), as a grassroots political campaign organizer and fundraiser for progressive candidates, and most, recently, in her development work for Planned Parenthood.

I am so pleased Lily agreed to join us. She is committed to our values, connected in progressive politics, and, as you will find out when you meet her, an absolutely delightful human being.

Forward!

Ruth

COMMENT by FREDRICK McKISSACK JR.

The Policing of Black America

Thirty years ago, on May 13, 1985, a Pennsylvania state police helicopter dropped explosives on a house occupied by members of the anarchist black liberation group MOVE. The bombing killed everyone inside and destroyed sixty-five homes in the surrounding neighborhood.

This anniversary arrived as Baltimore was convulsed by the death of Freddie Gray in police custody. It was another savage reminder of how little trust there is between the black community and those who claim to protect it.

Documentarian Jason Osder, a Philadelphia native, chronicled the clash between MOVE and police in his film *Let It Burn*.

MOVE and the Philadelphia police had a violent history, including a 1978 shootout that ended with one officer dead, a MOVE member beaten by police in front of TV cameras as he tried to surrender, and nine members in jail.

Justus in The Minneapolis Star

"It's a lot harder to fix the roof after it starts raining"

FROM THE PROGRESSIVE, 1968

In 1981, the organization moved to a row house in a black, middle-class neighborhood in West Philadelphia. Tensions rose quickly between residents and MOVE, as the latter composted human feces, boarded up windows, and blared revolutionary rhetoric on bullhorns. And then there was, police believed, signs of a growing cache of guns.

The neighbors—who had tried talking with MOVE, but to no avail—wanted action against a problem neighbor; after years of letting the problem fester, the police launched a military operation, and that's how Osage Avenue became a war zone.

As *The Progressive* editorialized at the time, "Until a few weeks before the police assault, the mayor acknowledged that he had no legal basis even to evict MOVE adherents. So they weren't evicted; they were murdered."

Police poured 10,000 rounds into the house. A state police helicopter dropped C4 charges on the roof. Firefighters were told not to intervene, although earlier, ironically, firemen turned their hoses on the house in an effort to drive the residents out.

By evening, six adults and five children were dead, the neighborhood was in flames, and Americans, like me, were trying to sort out the truth. We would learn, from a commission that looked into the bombing, that the city acted irresponsibly, some would even venture to say criminally, in its handling of MOVE. No one was ever arrested or charged.

In 1996, a federal jury ordered the city to pay $1.5 million to Ramona Africa, the only surviving adult member of MOVE, and relatives of two of the victims.

The West Philadelphia neighborhood remains silent and boarded up, a shell of itself.

Thirty years ago, as a nineteen-year-old, I dared to dream that when I reached my parents' age, America would be a more inclusive place. Would there be a need for a group like MOVE? Would racism be ended?

Now I am forty-nine with a son whose future I worry about.

Baltimore is the latest chapter in the long, brutal story of the policing of black America. However, there are two new developments in this latest episode that might lead to lasting change. Baltimore may be the place where we see true justice and authentic revolution. The former is happening, the latter might be wishful thinking. We'll see.

On May 1, the state's attorney for Baltimore, Marilyn Mosby, filed charges of second-degree murder, involuntary manslaughter, and other felonies against six police officers involved in the death of Freddie Gray.

Mosby issued an astoundingly swift condemnation of the actions of the officers. Mosby, whose family has a long history in law enforcement, detailed the atrocities committed by three white and three black officers. It started with a false arrest and a succession of savageries that ended with Gray's death.

Mosby's body language showed that this wasn't about family. Despite protests from the Fraternal Order of Police that political associations taint the state's attorney, Mosby appears to understand her duty. And that is the internal struggle: When looking at media stories about Mosby's victory, and the subsequent shake-up of the old boy network in the state's attorney office, one gets the feeling that Gray's death exposes tensions inside the system, too. The knot between police and prosecutors is unraveling.

"No one is above the law," Mosby said in announcing the charges, later adding, "To the youth of this city, I will seek justice on your behalf. This is a moment. This is your moment."

Mosby is alluding to the new movement dubbed Black Spring or #Blackspring. Activists are linking themselves to recent revolutionary moments in the Middle East, to Prague in 1968 and Hungary in 1956—where violently oppressive regimes were met on the street by the people. Today, the regimes' actions are monitored, cataloged and uploaded, unfiltered, to the web.

#Blackspring is also different from these other movements. It encompasses the devastation of centuries of economic marginalization of African Americans that our country takes as a historic inevitability rather than a national disgrace. Patrisse Cullors, co-founder of #blacklivesmatter, best described the Black Spring movement on *The HuffPost Show*:

"Black Spring is about really looking at this moment, not these isolated incidents," she said. "Black people are not a monolithic group, but what we are facing is something that's extreme—and that's poverty, that's homelessness, that's higher rates of joblessness, that's law enforcement invading our communities day in and day out. . . . This Black Spring is about really talking about a national uprising. We should be honored to talk about this moment."

The officers involved in Freddie Gray's death were black and white, male and female, experienced and relative rookies. The deaths of black boys and men at the hands of officers is not monochrome. Police departments need to become more diverse. However, the police remained mired in the ethos of "blue versus black." Consequently, those assigned to protect black neighborhoods from criminals are seen as protectors of privilege. Public officials, regardless of race, cover for and curry favor with the elite.

A kid is arrested and badly beaten for mouthing off, but not a single Wall Street banker who crashed the global economy goes to jail. Blacks face a giant gap in education and income that hasn't narrowed in fifty years.

In 1968, speaking in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, then and now a white suburban enclave of Detroit, Martin Luther King Jr. observed this about black "rioters":

"And I must say tonight that a riot is the language of the unheard," he said. "And what is it America has failed to hear? ... It has failed to hear that the promises of freedom and justice have not been met. And it has failed to hear that large segments of white society are more concerned about tranquility and the status quo than about justice and humanity."

MOVE was born of that failure. Ferguson and Baltimore were born of that failure. Let's hope the Black Spring movement marches us toward a better future. ◆

Fredrick McKissack Jr. is a writer, editor, and longtime contributor to the Progressive Media Project.

Bad News, Good News

Former Congresswoman Michele Bachmann told Christian radio host Jan Markell that President Obama's negotiations with Iran are a sign of the End Times. "If we actually turn our back on Israel as we have seen Barack Obama do today," she said, "what the Bible says is that our nation and the people of our nation will reap a whirlwind, and we could see economic disasters, natural disasters." But, she added brightly, "we have very little time—in my opinion—left before the second return of Christ. That's good news!"

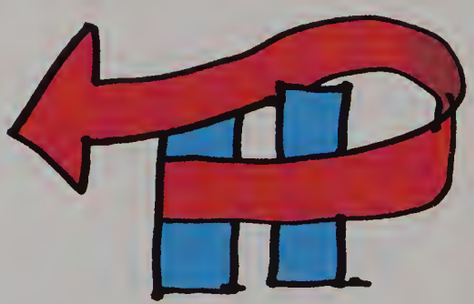
Police Malpractice

The sheriff of Tulsa County, Oklahoma, compared the shooting of an unarmed black man by a white reserve deputy to the kind of mistakes doctors make in an operating room, *Talking Points Memo* reports. Reserve Deputy Robert Bates, seventy-three, accidentally shot Eric Harris on April 2 when he mistook his own handgun for a Taser. "A video released over the weekend showed a deputy telling Harris 'fuck your breath' when he complained of being short of breath after being shot. 'He made an error,' Sheriff Stanley Glanz told the *Tulsa World* newspaper. 'How many errors are made in an operating room every week?'"

Nobody Here But Us Reformers

U.S. Senator and Republican Presidential contender Rand Paul, writing for *Time* magazine in praise of billionaire industrialists Charles and David Koch, who have spent hundreds of millions of dollars trying to sway elections and public policy: "Unlike many crony capitalists who troll the halls of Congress looking for favors, the Kochs have consistently lobbied against special-interest politics."

Time Warp



Pat Robertson kicked off *The 700 Club* by comparing the Hillary Clinton campaign to the movie *Back to the Future*. "Are we going back to the '50s, is that where we want to be? Or in the '70s?" Robertson asked, without irony, *Right Wing Watch* reports. "Well, it looks like one of the candidates wants to take us back to the future."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY STUART GOLDENBERG

Readers are invited to submit No Comment items. Please send original clippings or photocopies and give the name and date of publication to editorial@progressive.org or 409 E. Main Street, Madison, WI 53703. Submissions cannot be acknowledged or returned.

On Edge of Sports:

When I read Dave Zirin's article "How Cassius Clay Became Muhammad Ali" (April issue), I hoped Mr. Zirin would say a word or two respecting the name of Cassius Marcellus Clay. The original bearer of that name in Kentucky was a cousin of Henry Clay, who was later U.S. ambassador to Russia and a militant abolitionist. He published an anti-slavery newspaper, and made anti-slavery speeches. To be an abolitionist in a slave state was far more radical and dangerous than to be an abolitionist in New England. Henry David Thoreau never had to defend himself with a bowie knife. Though the boxer's change of names is understandable enough and completely his own business, it ought to be remembered that the name he discarded was a respectable one.

—Wendell Berry

On Smoking Gun:

As a parent who happens to be a finance lawyer, I am a fan and subscriber. However, I think your Smoking Gun story on domestic spying in the April issue missed the most important information in the documents you disclosed: "to insure the program meets its goals, of which assets forfeiture is primary." Not only are these programs a breach of what should be constitutionally protected information, but their primary purpose is not even law enforcement—just like in Ferguson, the goal is revenue. All of these asset forfeiture programs can be traced back to the vile programs of the Reagan years when the "privatization" of government was the cure for all problems.

In law school, I spent a summer as an intern at my local U.S. Attorney's office and worked with the asset forfeiture attorney. While he was a very honorable and honest person and respected the law, the FBI agents and DEA agents pursuing cases regularly based their decisions on the value of the property they could seize, not on best law-enforcement practices. I recall one agent saying, only partially in jest, when told he lacked the legal standing to seize a suspect's new car, instead of his beat-up van, "But if we get the good car, I can get a new gun." Funding law enforcement through asset forfeiture leads not only to injustice but to programs created with the primary goal of generating revenue (their words, not mine). Thank you, and keep up the wonderful work.

—Brian Whaley

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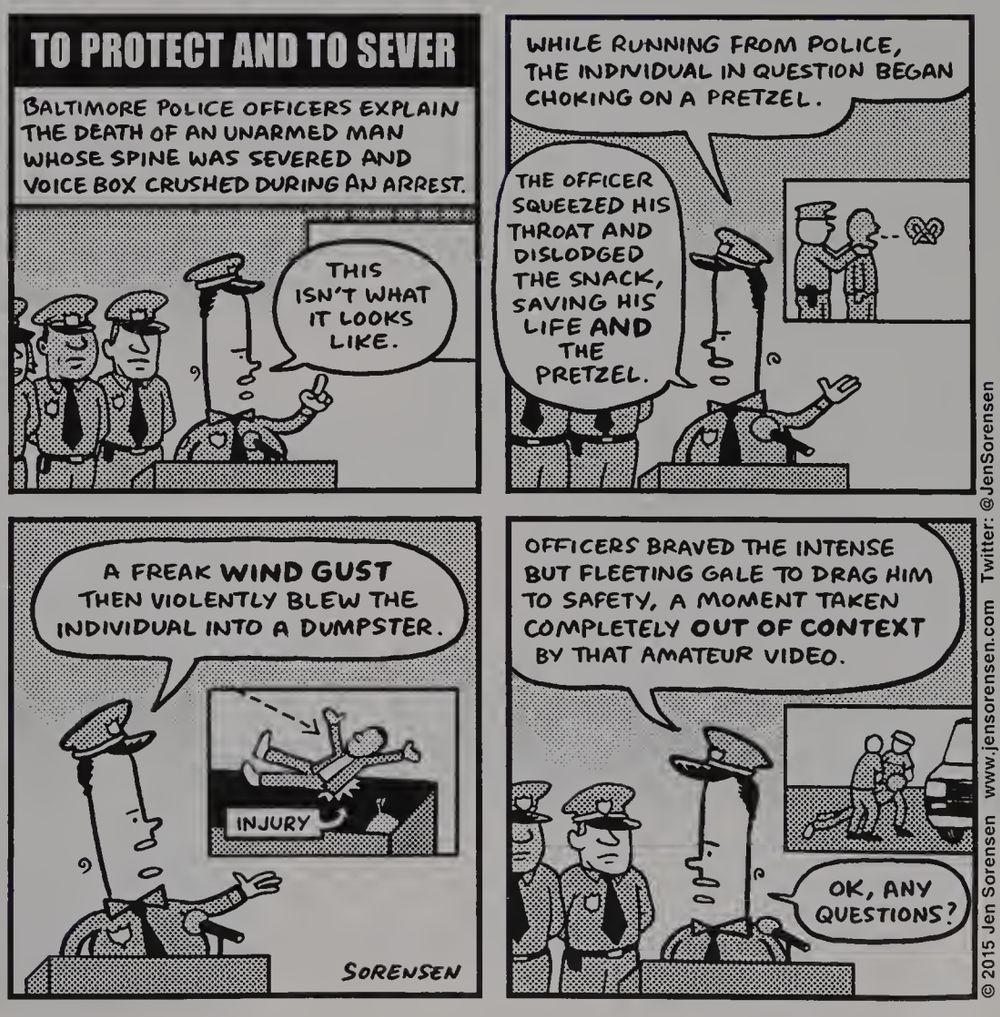
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OK, ANY QUESTIONS?
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Chicago's South East Side Rises Up Against the Kochs

Huge piles of petroleum coke have been blackening the Tenth Ward on Chicago's South East Side and making residents sick for years. The oil refinery byproduct is stored out in the open at KCBX Terminals, owned by David and Charles Koch.

ALL PHOTOS © TERRY EVANS

Alderman John Pope, a Mayor Rahm Emanuel supporter who raised $30,000 from the Kochs for his recent political campaign, ignored neighbors' complaints about the pollution.

A historic grassroots campaign against Pope energized the neighborhood's mostly Latino, working-class residents.

Senator Bernie Sanders, Independent of Vermont, joined a rally for teacher and activist Susan Sadlowski Garza, comparing her campaign to the David-and-Goliath struggle against Chevron in Richmond, California.

After a protracted recount battle, Garza declared victory. "When we fight," said Garza's brother, union activist Ed Sadlowski, "we win."

THE PROGRESSIVE MEDIA PROJECT

What to Do About Missing Black Men

By Raina J. Johnson

Black men are missing from daily life. We ought to treat this problem as a public health crisis. Because it is, truly, an epidemic.

As a single black woman living in Milwaukee, I feel and see this void of black men every day.

Because of early deaths or because they are behind bars, there are eighty-three black men for every 100 black women between the ages of twenty-five and fifty-four living outside of jail.

Some weeks ago, there was a tragic series of events in Milwaukee that claimed the lives of two black men and two black boys. It made my heart sink. Four.

Milwaukee, with approximately 240,000 black residents, is "missing" 14,000 black men. We need to work on a serious solution to the disproportionate number of black men incarcerated for marijuana possession, and stop criminalizing men in poverty. Let's stop locking men up for failure to pay child support. Let's ensure they have access to family-supporting jobs and health care to treat mental illness.

We must do better, as a community and as a nation. ◆

PUBLIC SCHOOL SHAKEDOWN

The Ultimate Test and Punish

By Jan Resseger

Eleven educators in Atlanta got long prison sentences in that city's test-cheating scandal. On the one hand, this is a local story. It is about one city's response to the federal testing law, No Child Left Behind, and the law's demands for immediate, radical change. But the story of the teachers and administrators who will be locked away for years also shows something profound about what happens when laws pressure real people to implement policies that have nothing whatever to do with reality.

The problem is much larger than Atlanta. *The Guardian* reports "documented cheating in at least 40 states, since the Atlanta Public Schools cheating scandal came to light." In March of 2011, *USA Today* uncovered what seems to have been an obvious cheating scandal in Washington, D.C. Michelle Rhee, the Washington, D.C. superintendent at the time, never had to answer for those allegations, despite an effort of several years by PBS journalist John Merrow to uncover e-mails that would have exposed Rhee's and the district's wrongdoing.

As a society we've been told that educators can, in a year or two, magically turn around the school achievement of all children in a class or even a whole school or school district. Atlanta's school superintendent, Dr. Beverly Hall, promised she could do that and then set out to prove it.

"Turnaround" is the code word for what we have been demanding of public schools for over a decade now. Turn a school around, even if "turnaround" is defined as firing all the teachers or just closing the school. We have asked educators to do the impossible in raising students' test scores; now we're reaping the results. ◆

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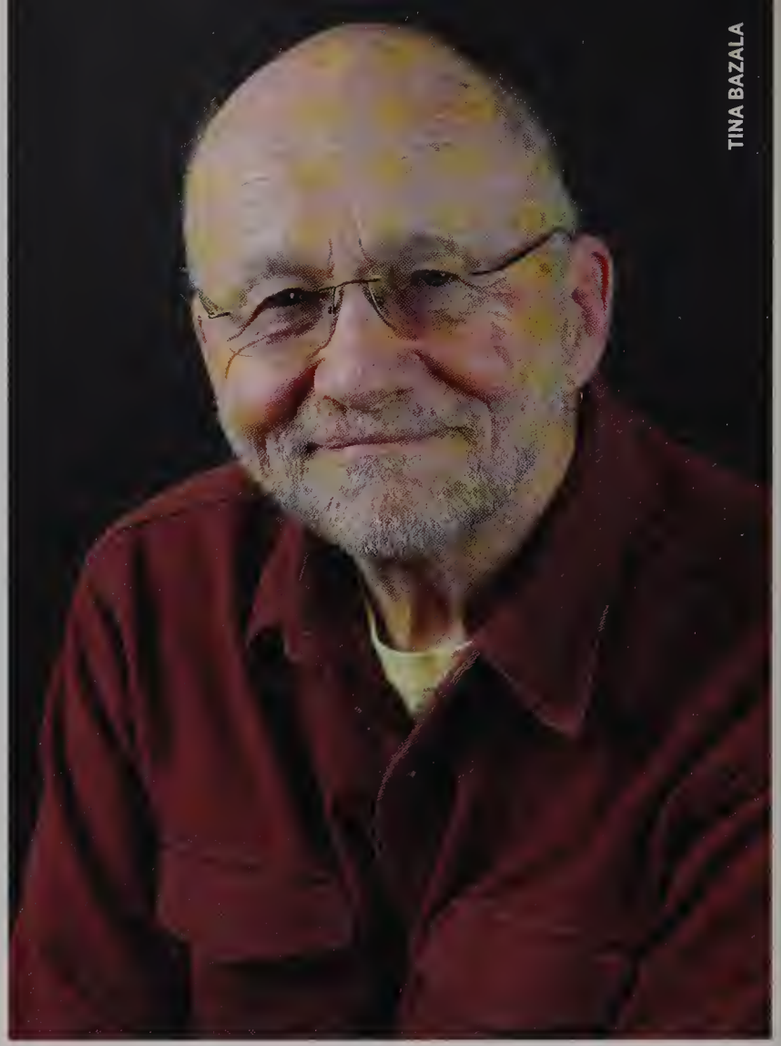
A Police Chief's Call for Reform

By David C. Couper


TINA BAZALA

Shortly after Senator Barack Obama became President-elect, I sent him a letter warning about the increasing militarization of our nation's police.

"Nothing is more endangering to a democracy than the militarization of its local police," the letter said. "Our police play a vital role in who we are as a nation. We will not have justice in our courts unless it is first a working value of our nation's police."

The letter also urged Obama toward "a re-examination of where our nation's police are today, where they need to be, the kind of people we need to police our communities, and how police should be educated, trained, and deployed. This must be done before it is too late."

Today, the use of deadly force by police across the country has become a national disgrace. We have been overwhelmed by the all-too-frequent deaths of black men and persons with mental illness at the hands of police. It has happened in Ferguson, Staten Island, Cleveland, Albuquerque, North Charleston, Baltimore, and even Madison, Wisconsin, where I served as chief of police for more than twenty years.

Were it not for the advent of new technologies, like cellphones that take video, many of the incidents documented above would have been lost in doctored police reports, organizational denial, and cries of "support our police." It is difficult not to be stunned after viewing the videos.

I have come to the conclusion that the problem is not bad cops, but rather a bad system of training. It is a vast problem. The good news: It is a correctable one. But solving the problem must start now.

David C. Couper was Madison's chief of police from 1972 to 1993. Since his retirement, he has attended seminary and was ordained as a priest in the Episcopal Church. He now lives west of Madison and serves a small church in North Lake, Wisconsin. He is the author of Arrested Development: A Veteran Police Chief Sounds Off About Protest, Racism, Corruption and the Seven Steps Necessary to Improve Our Nation's Police *(2012) and* How to Rate Your Local Police *(2015).*

Since 9/11, our nation has lived in a climate of low-grade fear. Our decade-long military adventures abroad have led to the creeping militarization of our nation's police at home. Police have gone from being the guardians of our democracy to being our homespun warriors. It is not an appropriate shift: Police guard and protect us; a warrior's job is to kill our declared enemies.

Our nation's Constitution declares the values of life and liberty, and our Bill of Rights asserts we are not to be deprived of life or liberty without due process. While we affirm these values as a people, we have not always practiced them as well as we should.

The questionable killings by police drive home the point. Police in some communities have lost the confidence of those they are sworn to protect and serve. They are seen as threats to justice, not agents of it. That is bad for everyone, including cops.

If police commit to rebuild the trust they have lost, they will be more effective, their work will be personally rewarding, and they will be safer. But this will not begin to happen until their system of using deadly force is fixed.

It is impossible to have this discussion without acknowledging the role of race. Police in America practice often two styles of policing: one for people of means, mainly whites, and another for those who are poor, racial minorities, immigrants, or mentally ill.

When I talk publicly about the problem of deadly force and disrespect, many white people look at me with puzzled eyes. They don't know what I am talking about because, as it turns out, they have had little, if any, contact with police. Not so for those men and women of color in my audience. They know—and they know all too well. Recent discussions have helped us understand that "unconscious bias" is inherent in our species; what is needed is being able to identify and manage it.

I came to Madison in 1972 as a young, reform-minded police chief. The department I inherited was mostly white, traditional, and battling with students and young people over the war in Vietnam. Of 300 officers, one was African American. Within the patrol ranks, there were no women. The seven women we did have were unarmed juvenile policewomen, who were required to have a four-year college degree. Policemen, on the other hand, were required only to have a high school diploma.

One of my most important improvements, along with trying out new and softer ways of handling almost daily protests, was to integrate the department. I announced that one-half of the new officers we hired must be women and officers of color. This became our hiring standard for the two decades I led the department.

When I retired, twenty-one years later, 10 percent of Madison police officers were African American and 25 percent were women. It took that long and that level of commitment. We also saw to it that women and minorities were afforded fresh opportunities within the department with regard to assignment and promotion. I believed in diversity because I knew that a diverse police department will do a better job working with the community and be safer for its officers.

Transforming the police is just like management guru Peter Drucker once said: Leaders have to be "monomaniacs with a mission." They must also be persistent, patient, and passionate. One of my mantras in those early days was, "Let's make the changes we need and not have the court make them for us."

While I am glad to see many of our nation's larger departments have been forced to change through "consent decrees," I remain concerned that this is what it took for change to occur.

Looking at Ferguson and Baltimore, and the need for many police departments in our nation to better represent those they serve, I worry if they will have the long-term tenacity to do what we did.

Leading an organization-wide transformation is a difficult and often painful process. When I proposed the changes that I believed were necessary, they were met with resistance. Many of the old guard employees were not happy. They felt I was giving up control of the organization. Of the ten top commanders, I had the support of three of them.

I remember speaking about this with an executive from a Milwaukee company whom I met at a management seminar. He told me: "David, if you have 25 percent of your command staff on board, that's enough. Move forward. Tell them you need them to come with you. Tell them it's like a one-way boat. You want every-

one on board even if they are hesitant."

The next day, I called a meeting of my management team and told them the boat story. I needed them to come with me. I would help them be successful in this new venture. But they needed to come on board now.

Many were reluctant. They were afraid to ask and listen to their employees, to be collaborative with them, but they moved forward. And during the next ten years, we made remarkable organizational improvements. Today, the president of the police officers' union still is a member of the department management team and an elected officers' council still meets monthly with Madison's chief of police to give input and support.

Yes, transformation is difficult and painful, yet necessary if an organization is to improve. But that's what leaders do: They lead change, no matter how many others are in the boat with them.

How did we get to where we are today? It seems we unknowingly fell into a system of criminal justice in America that has become oriented more toward domination than problem-solving, more toward arrest and incarceration than prevention and treatment, more toward using coercion rather than earned authority to get their work done.

I am not the first person to identify systems of social and economic domination, collective actions that favor the wealthy and powerful at the expense of those who are not. The criminal justice system is just one of our many domination systems.

It is my opinion that in order to restore trust between police and the communities they serve, we need to begin to heal the relationships between blacks and police. If this fails to happen, our present system of policing will continue to erode away the foundational values of our great society, and we will end up with police who look and act like those in nondemocratic countries.

While policing is a dangerous occupation, it is not as dangerous as many people think. The incidence of fatal injuries for police is much lower than for other professions, including loggers, fishers, roofers, and airline pilots. Sadly, over the last decade, an average of 150 police officers have lost their lives each year in the line of duty, to causes ranging from gunfire to traffic accidents.

In contrast, it is estimated that an average of more than 900 U.S. citizens a year are killed by police; that is between two and three people per day. While more whites than nonwhites are killed by police, a recent analysis found that blacks are three times more likely to meet this fate than whites. Tracking these numbers is difficult because there is no federal requirement for police to report information on the people they kill.

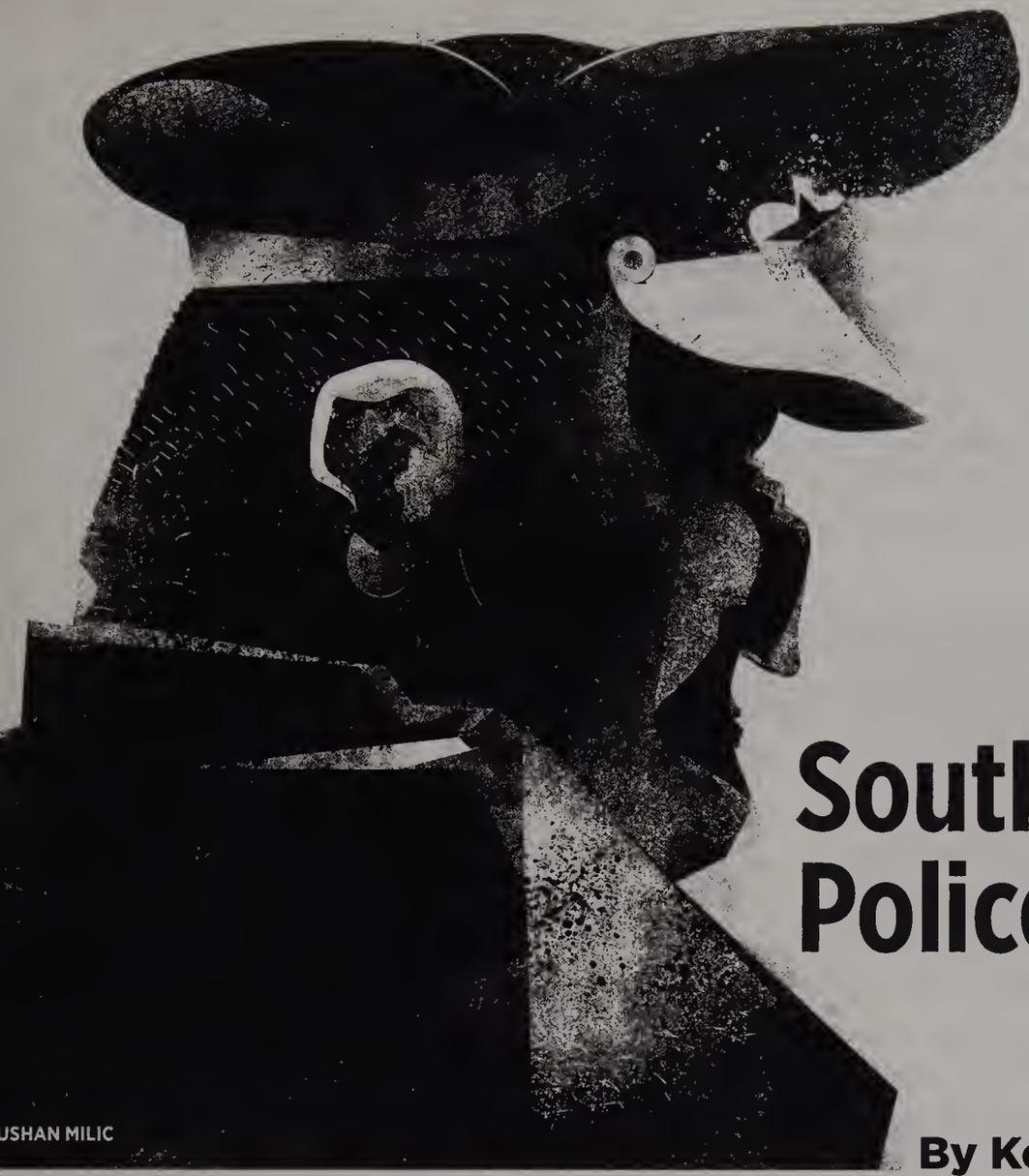
One problem is the legal standard for the use of deadly force, as established by a 1989 U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Graham v. Connor*. The court's ruling is quite broad. It permits a police officer to use deadly force when, in the mind of the officer, the person poses an "immediate threat to the safety of the officers or others."

Making matters worse is the questionable instruction given to police recruits. They are taught that a person armed with an edged weapon and within a twenty-one-foot distance can kill them before they can discharge their firearm. And police, when confronted with situations they believe merit the use of deadly force, are taught to shoot and keep shooting multiple times at a person's "center mass"—the chest and heart.

A much better approach would be for police leaders to affirm their department's commitment to the sanctity of life and discuss how they are going to change their policies and practice to reduce the use of deadly force. The public needs to know that their police are trained to de-escalate and manage conflict situations; that they are able to control their fear, and be respectful to everyone with whom they come in contact, regardless of their station in life.

Police are here to represent us. They may tell us that using deadly force in these situations is legal, and, therefore, permissible. However, if they do that, we need to tell them that even if it is permissible, it is not moral, and it is no longer acceptable.

In 1829, when setting forth the principles of policing a democracy, Sir Robert Peel declared, "The police are the public and the public are the police." That gives we the people the right to say: "Let's fix this. And fix it now." ◆



USHAN MILIC

South Carolina's Police State

By Kevin Alexander Gray

When accused murderer and former North Charleston patrolman Michael Thomas Slager's lawyer said his client "felt threatened," he may have been telling the truth. But it wasn't Slager's life that was threatened. It was his sense of authority. Sometimes, that can spark a life-ending escalation.

Walter Lamer Scott, a fifty-year-old veteran and father of four, was running away when officer Slager shot him repeatedly in the back on April 4. Slager, thirty-three, fired his taser at Scott, hitting him at least once. When Scott kept running, Slager opened fire. Eight times. Four bullets hit Scott in the back and one hit him in the ear.

Then, after slapping on handcuffs, Slager placed the taser next to Scott's body. "Shots fired and the subject is down," he told the dispatcher. "He took my taser."

Unfortunately for Slager, a Dominican immigrant named Feidin Santana, on his way to work, captured the crime using the video-camera on his phone. The video proved what many blacks take as gospel: Police lie.

Kevin Alexander Gray is a writer and activist living in South Carolina.

A Gallup review of polling data from 2011 to 2014 showed that 59 percent of whites had "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in police, compared with only 37 percent of black respondents. Also, blacks rated police officers lower for honesty and ethics than whites. In Gallup data from 2010 to 2013, "59 percent of whites say the honesty and ethics of police officers is very high or high, compared with 45 percent of blacks."

Slager's shooting of Scott, for which he is facing a murder charge, is not going to drive these numbers up.

It's bad enough that he shot his victim in the back. When I was growing up watching cowboy movies, the "code of the West" held that shooting someone in the back was a cowardly thing to do. But handcuffing a dead or dying black man lying face down in the dirt to cover up your misdeed is as low-down as you can go.

Other racial imagery comes to mind watching Santana's unwitting "snuff film." An enslaved African unsuccessfully trying to escape his deadly overseer. Or a black sharecropper or civil-rights worker trying to elude the Klansman's noose.

After the video became public, the reaction of local authorities was swift. "I was sickened by what I saw," said police chief Eddie Driggers. North Charleston Mayor Keith Summey announced that the city would be equipping all of its officers with body cameras.

Yet the nature of Slager's stop—a busted brake light—and the actions of the officers who arrived on the scene immediately after the killing reveal deeper problems. Just as in Ferguson, Missouri, the Department of Justice will probably substantiate unequal enforcement against blacks, possibly including excessive ticketing, fees, and fines.

North Charleston has a 47 percent black population, yet the town's police department is 80 percent white. But hiring more black officers isn't necessarily a cure-all for a police department with a pattern of discriminatory race relations. Black officers can and do adopt the practices of their white counterparts.

The first cop to arrive at the scene after Scott's killing was black. The first official police report said that the officers performed first aid. They did not. The black officer arrived to assist Slager, not the dying man.

Racists harbor the illusion that it's just black people getting killed and they deserve it. Just read the comment sections of the various news reports on such incidents. Some folks will always believe that black people are inherently criminal. So when police and media mention drugs, guns, gang-related activities, or prior arrests, it validates their beliefs. Worse are those who don't consider themselves racists, black and white, who hear the indicting buzzwords, turn a blind eye, and tune it out.

Some things are clear. Police shoot at blacks more often than they shoot at whites, and they disproportionately kill them. Between 2010 and 2014, police in South Carolina shot at least 209 suspects and killed 79 of them. Of the suspects, 101 were black and 67 were white, according to data gathered by *The State* newspaper in Columbia, S.C. Among those killed, 34 were black and 41 were white (in 4 cases the suspect's race is unclear). In only 3 of the 209 cases were officers investigated for misuse of force, and no one was convicted.

Nationally, 1,215 white people and 932 blacks died at police hands from 2003 to 2009, according to the Justice Department. Other analysts put the number of police homicides between 2003 and 2011 at 7,427, an average of 928 per year. Nobody really knows the exact figure because police organizations don't report them.

We do know that in just the first four months of this year, there have been almost 400 police killings, according to KilledByPolice.net. Not just blacks, not just men, but men and women, old, young, mentally ill, white and Latino.

There have long been allegations of poor race relations and abusive police in North Charleston. Same story in Ferguson and in Baltimore. It's the same story with small and large police departments that operate in predominantly black and low-income neighborhoods all over the United States.

Black people endure police talking to them disrespectfully. They live with the reality that a traffic stop can often be a situation where your life is in danger by someone who is supposed to be protecting you. They know how police act when they think nobody is watch-

ing and they think whites simply don't care or, worse, support what they do.

If that video of Walter Scott hadn't come out, the police would have covered up this murder. Scott's family sees a measure of justice being served with the murder charge against the officer.

If you believe your eyes, Slager's conduct is inconsistent with *Tennessee v. Garner*, a 1985 Supreme Court ruling which held that officers can use deadly force against a fleeing suspect only when there is probable cause that the suspect "poses a significant threat of death or serious physical injury to the officer or others." I believe my eyes. Yet I still believe Slager is presumed innocent until proven guilty. That he deserves the due process that he didn't extend to Walter Scott. I don't wish to see him suffer the same fate as Scott. Some police believe that killing black people, and treating them as subhuman when they think no one is looking, makes their lives safer. It does not. Bad cops make good cops bad when they turn a blind eye to abuse. ◆

Ten Ways to End the Scourge of Police Violence

1. Mandate the use of body cameras. Many police organizations already use dash cams and have pretty much accepted body cameras as the coming thing. There must be penalties, including losing your job, for tampering with or disabling a body cam.
2. Promote community policing where police actually get out of their cars and interact with community residents. This includes ending the different manifestations of "stop and frisk," the proliferation of K-9 units reminiscent of Bull Connor policing and apartheid South Africa, and rejecting the failed "broken windows" policing practice.
3. Revive grassroots organizing and mobilization across race and ethnic lines. It used to be that the local NAACP chapters, at least in South Carolina, were where people went to report police abuse. The NAACP and organizations like Black Lives Matters need to reclaim that role—looking out for the citizens and taking these reports so that we can know what is going on out there in the community and act on it.
4. Create independent citizen review boards with subpoena power and the ability to recommend charges against rogue cops to a grand jury. We can't allow police to police themselves. And prosecutors more often than not unquestioningly defend the actions of police. We need to set up grassroots citizens' tribunals to collect policing data.
5. Curtail, if not end, the practice of shoot to kill. In the last five years in South Carolina, only four police officers were killed in the line of duty—compared to the seventy-nine people killed by police. There is no empirical data that would substantiate an epidemic of violence against police officers in this state or country.
6. Collect accurate and reliable statistics on shootings by police. The lack of reporting requirements undermines trust in law enforcement.
7. Re-evaluate the military-to-police pipeline. Many municipalities hire people out of the military because of their service or combat experience. Yet serving the people isn't combat. The citizens are not "enemy combatants." It's not "us versus them."
8. Roll back the militarization of police departments. Decrease the size and use of SWAT teams, limit no-knock searches, return and reject surplus war-fighting equipment and weapons for police.
9. Use psychological testing to weed out cops who are racist, sadistic, or likely to respond badly to stress.
10. Establish a Department of Justice review of police jurisdictions and departments with questionable community relations, much like the review of the Ferguson Police Department, to assess the economic impact and fairness of fines, fees and other such charges levied against citizens as well as the employment practices of those departments.

—Kevin Alexander Gray

The Secret Group That Wants to Take Over Your School

By Sarah Lahm

JEM SULLIVAN

Don't look now, but there's something creepy coming toward you, and it wants to take over your public school system. Sure, it's connected—through all-important grants—to many of the big names in today's education reform movement (Gates, Walton, Broad), but most people have probably never heard of it.

This "education reform powerhouse" is the Center on Reinventing Public Education, which goes by the acronym CRPE—or "creepy." How fitting. While there are many individuals and organizations on the front lines of the free-market education reform movement—from Teach for America, to Education Secretary Arne Duncan, to the Recovery School District in New Orleans—CRPE has not been publicly outed. Instead, it has steadily carved out an influential role for itself behind the scenes.

In fact, CRPE operates in a manner that is strikingly similar to ALEC (the American Legislative Exchange Council), the secretive, powerful group funded by the Koch brothers and a large roster of corporations. Here's a look at how the two organizations work:

Sarah Lahm is a Minneapolis-based writer and former English instructor. She blogs about education at brightlightsmallcity.com.

1. Member networks: Both CRPE and ALEC have a "secret club" component, through their member networks. With ALEC, the members are state legislators. With CRPE, they are school districts from across the United States (there are currently thirty-nine of them).
2. Network meetings: Both CRPE and ALEC host member network meetings or conferences, where a common philosophy (based on a distinct rightwing ideology) is honed, articulated, and shared.
3. Model legislation: Both CRPE and ALEC create sample, model policies (CRPE) or "cookie-cutter bills" (ALEC) for the districts or legislators who are part of their member networks.
4. Free-market funders: Like ALEC, CRPE is funded by very wealthy, free-market-focused special interests, including the Walton Foundation.

One difference is that ALEC has been around since the early 1970s while CRPE is a more recent concoction. University of Washington political science professor Paul T. Hill founded the group in 1993, just as the "accountability" movement in public education was taking off, and it is housed at the University of Washington-Bothell. CRPE is affiliated with the university, but Hill explains, "Our work is funded through private philanthropic dollars, federal grants, and contracts." And, although CRPE describes itself as engaging in "independent research and policy analysis," in 2011 the Center for Media and Democracy's Source Watch website tagged the group as an "industry-funded research center that . . . receives funding from corporate and billionaire philanthropists as well as the U.S. Department of Education."

While Hill may not be well known nationally, he is no shrinking violet when it comes to agenda-driven policy work. Beyond CRPE, he has been affiliated with the right-leaning Hoover Institute and its Koret Task Force on K-12 Education, which focuses on vouchers and other market-based, privatization-centered reforms for public schools.

And that right-leaning stamp is all over CRPE, which has built a network of "portfolio school districts" from New York City to New Orleans and beyond. It promises to run these districts like a stock portfolio. Under this model, schools are to become more "autonomous," and districts will be decentralized for a more "hands-off" approach. In an eighteen-month portfolio implementation guide that CRPE provides school districts, a suggested strategy for the first two months is to "announce the district will replace five schools with charter schools." Schools will be closed for such failures as "negative labor-management relations."

Many people in progressive-minded Minneapolis would be shocked to know that the Minneapolis public school system has been part of the CRPE network since 2010 (thanks to a makeover, led, for free, by consultants from the global consulting firm McKinsey and Company). Today, this shadowy organization is on the verge of completely overhauling the public school district's entire operation.

Anyone needing proof should look no further than the 2013 CRPE meeting for Portfolio Network members that was held in Seattle. A video from that meeting lays bare the competitive, resource-scarce mindset behind CRPE, and it even uses the Minneapolis public schools—albeit superficially—as a test case for the presentation.

The video—available on YouTube as "Dollars and Sense Accountability"—offers attendees lots of suggestions for how schools can expand their limited pots of money. The assumption always seems to be that schools just need to do more with less, so the suggestions are pragmatic. They include encouraging schools to grow their enrollment (the presenter, Marguerite Roza, who now works for CRPE, recommends pushing schools on this, because they'll always say they're too full). CRPE also suggests paying teachers extra to teach more kids, and pitting schools against one another in a battle for resources. All of this is based around a central question: What does it look like when a district starts to view schools like businesses?

To begin, Roza praises Minneapolis for its "enormous cooperation," because the district has offered its data for use as an example of how to view schools "in terms of cost and outcomes." Roza then shows participants a graph, where Minneapolis school sites (unnamed) are splayed out according to how much money they spend in comparison to how "high performing" they are. Before

she delves in too deeply, however, Roza makes one point very clear: "I hope when you leave this session, you realize that the money part of the equation has to be part of the accountability bit, so you have to start connecting the spending and the outcomes together," she says.

Throughout the video, it becomes clear that what Roza means is that the ideal school is one which spends less money but gets high test scores. It also becomes clear that, to Roza, and by extension CRPE, kids and schools are mere widgets in the *Hunger Games*-like landscape of school finance that CRPE promotes.

At one point, Roza points to the graph full of Minneapolis examples and says, "Look at the relationship between spending and outcomes! It's pretty dismal, right?" Roza acknowledges that "schools are messy," but then veers back to CRPE's market-driven ideology: "If we're trying to get to a system where we're leveraging our money to get the best possible outcomes we could get, we need a more robust relationship between spending and outcomes than we have."

In the video, Roza zeros in on the concept of "nice" schools, which fall into the high-spending, high-performing part of her graph, and she then makes a whole lot of creepy allegations about them. In her Minneapolis example, there is only one such school, which sits by itself up in the lonely far corner of the graph.

Roza seems to assume that this school is a high-spending hog, feeding off the trough, and getting great outcomes on every other school's "dime." If such a school exists in your district, Roza tells the hushed crowd, "You should figure out how much extra you're spending for those kids," because this is not a "replicable model." It's just too expensive, Roza concludes.

Her solution? Force such schools to "take more kids," and don't listen when they tell you they're too full. In fact, when they do tell you they are too full, simply ask them, "All right, did you want to give up the jazz band or the golf team?" Because, it seems, they must be lying about their ability to "cram more kids in," as Roza puts it, just so they can protect their elite, district-funded programs. (Roza seems not to understand that, in Minneapolis, there are wealthy neighborhoods, but there are no wealthy schools rolling in district dollars.)

It turns out that the school Roza was referring to is Minneapolis's Dowling Elementary, a K-5 site that indeed spends a lot of money. But it spends a lot because it serves an "unusually large percent of special needs kids," according to Minneapolis's former budget director Sarah Snapp, who was at the CRPE meeting. Snapp shared this information after Roza gave her fiscally conservative spiel.

Dowling Elementary is named after educator and legislator Michael Dowling, who, according to the school's website, "succeeded in having the first bill passed providing state aid for handicapped children in 1919. Being handicapped himself, Mr. Dowling realized the importance of equal access to education for all people." Even today, the school has a program for students with health-related disabilities. These students have their own special education classification, and Dowling was—and is—designed to meet their needs, alongside Dowling's non-special-needs population.

At the CRPE meeting, Snapp tells Roza that Dowling does have a "unique set of factors" that make it look like a big spender, and also warns that lumping all students in a district together "might mask some of what's going on."

Still, Roza moves on in her presentation, and makes a joke about the next section, called "Performance Funding," saying wryly, "This is where the school does well and we give them more money."

Not quite. This would be a dangerous path to go down, Roza warns, because if you give a school "cash" for doing well (on standardized tests, of course), then that "high-performing" school will also become a "higher spending" school. Forget that, says Roza. Instead, she advises redefining "accountability" as, simply, the "right to continue to operate" according to a "continuous improvement model."

Roza persists with her, and CRPE's, definition of accountability, saying schools will—no, *must*—"seek to continuously go up," with no "threshold" or end in sight, in terms of test-based measurements. The stakes are very high in this model. Roza explains that it is "constantly the lowest-performing, at a particular spending level, schools . . . that should go away or improve . . . and then you get a system that's constantly striving for higher performance."

The overall goal is to strip schools down from their messy, complicated "overspending" heights, and collapse them all into a pure "student-based" funding model.

(CRPE shares their love of funding students, not programs, with ALEC, which has a model "Student-Centered Funding" bill, essentially a school voucher program.) Then, says Roza, districts will have arrived at a cost and outcomes Nirvana, where they can "just manage on performance."

This, she explains, will yield a "vertical line full of dots" on a graph.

That may be the ideal way to view schools, students, and teachers from a CRPE point of view. On the ground, in Minneapolis, community members would probably object if it were known that their schools are being guided by the CRPE's rightwing ideology.

But this may be changing.

At an April 14 Minneapolis school board meeting, parents, teachers, and students from across the city came to express their frustration with the district and its latest plans.

First up, there was a contingent from Roosevelt High School, an old-time school in south Minneapolis that has 80 percent students of color and a high proportion of kids in poverty (76 percent). In March, Roosevelt parents and staff received their school's budget for the upcoming school year; it was $248,000 short of what they needed. The worst part? The budget cut—which was deceptively framed as an increase—came as Roosevelt stands to grow, by adding 100 new students to its incoming freshman class after years of being seen as one of Minneapolis's "less desirable" schools.

It also came just as Minneapolis Public Schools Interim Superintendent Michael Goar was making very public claims about "right-sizing" the district's budget, in order to send millions of dollars back into the pockets of the district's schools.

This strategy—of "right-sizing," with the promise that this will bring autonomy and funds straight to the schools—is CRPE all the way. Tellingly, a brief CRPE video about the virtues of school autonomy includes the insistence that schools must be given the "freedom" to control their money, as the ultimate goal, in the words of CRPE founder Paul Hill, is for a school to be "as free about what it does as a charter school."

But the Roosevelt parents and students are not buying it. For the first time in years, under the energetic leadership of parent Jeanette Bower, the school has been getting organized—and vocal. School supporters went to the school board meeting to rally for Roosevelt, and to continue changing the school's image from that of a "ghetto school," in the words of ninth grade student Lewis Martin, to that of a school people choose to come to.

Their list of complaints about the lack of funding for Roosevelt were long, and will sound familiar to anyone who has been watching the move to defund and privatize America's public schools:

Roosevelt is the only high school in Minneapolis with no theater program, and the district is not providing any funds to remedy this.

With budget cuts, the school will have to lay off its community liaisons, who have been going out into the community to change the narrative of "failure" (due to test scores) that hovers over the school.

The school will have to let its librarian go, and class sizes may increase.

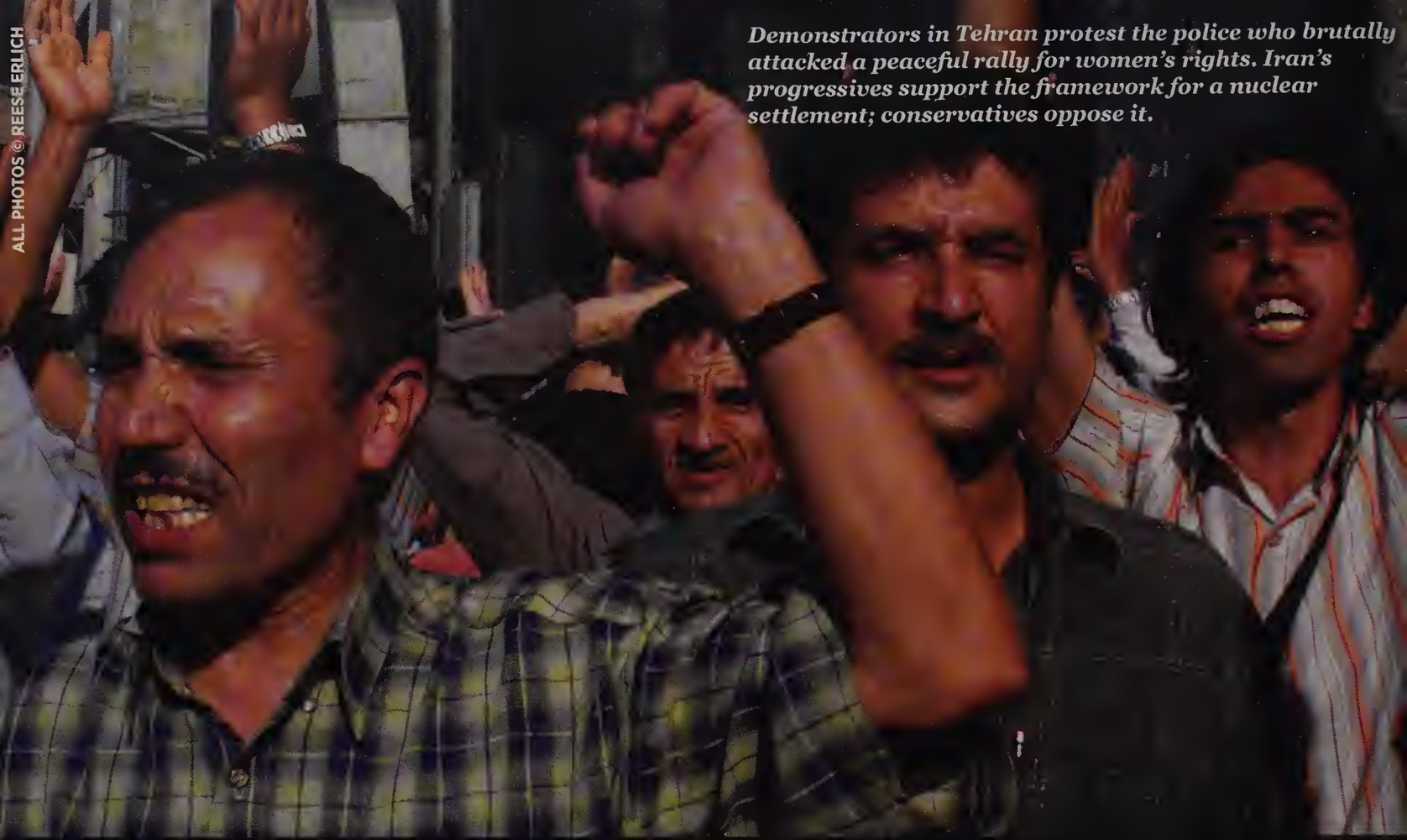
Also, the district will only provide funding for the 100 new students who have signed up to attend Roosevelt next year in the fall, when the students actually show up. The problem with this, in the eyes of the Roosevelt community, is that the school can't hire extra teachers because the hiring season is happening now, in the spring. (This is CRPE's preferred way to fund schools: only according to the numbers of students who show up.)

For Roosevelt High School senior Shahmar Dennis, who also spoke out at the April 14 board meeting, the lack of clear information from the district around Roosevelt's budget is troubling.

"We are a school on the rise, but our music program will suffer," he says. "We have more students coming next year, but we can't buy new instruments."

Dennis explained that he is going off to college in the fall, but that he still deeply cares about his school: "I won't be here next year but I want to see Roosevelt High School growing and doing well academically, with a good theater program."

That desire is diametrically opposed to the CRPE agenda. ◆



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Demonstrators in Tehran protest the police who brutally attacked a peaceful rally for women's rights. Iran's progressives support the framework for a nuclear settlement; conservatives oppose it.

Iran's State of Distrust

by Reese Erlich

In Washington, politicians debate whether the United States can trust Iran to eliminate its nuclear capabilities. The debate in Iran is the mirror image: Iranians wonder if they can trust the United States.

Shiite Muslim clerics dominate the Iranian government. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, ultimately decides whether to accept a final accord limiting Iran's nuclear power program.

In early April, the United States, Iran, the five U.N. Security Council members plus Germany agreed to a political framework in Lausanne, Switzerland, to ensure Iran would maintain peaceful use of its nuclear facilities. The framework was so controversial that opposing sides couldn't agree on a joint declaration. Critics question whether they can reach an agreement by the end of June.

Reaching a final deal will be extremely difficult because of years of mutual suspicion. On the one hand, most Iranians want to see an end to conflict with the United States, according to Kourosh Ziabari, a journalist who lives in Rasht, on the Caspian Sea about 220 miles from Tehran. "The majority of ordinary citizens believe that a comprehensive nuclear deal is essential to the welfare, security and peace in Iran's future," he says.

At the same time, Iranians worry whether the U.S. government will keep its promises. Hamed Ghashghavi, a freelance researcher on North American issues living in Tehran, cites the U.S. occupation of Iraq as just one example of how the United States creates "an atmosphere of deep mistrust and suspicion."

"The Iranian nation can no longer afford the risk of trusting U.S. officials," he says.

Iranians believe that the whole premise of the negotiations rests on falsehoods, according to Muhammad Sahimi, an Iran analyst and professor at the University of Southern California.

He points out that U.S. intelligence agencies and the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) agree Iran has neither a nuclear bomb nor a program to develop one.

The Obama Administration claims it seeks to stop Iran from reaching a "breakout point" after which Iran would have enough nuclear material for a bomb. Sahimi dismisses those fears. Iranians haven't mastered the complicated technology to actually build a bomb, he says, and are at least three to five years away. Undermining Iran's regional power—not thwarting its nuclear ambitions—is the United States and Israel's real aim, he contends.

"This is about preserving U.S./Israel hegemony in the Middle East, rather than a security issue," says Sahimi. Given this viewpoint, Iranians understandably have a sharply different perspective about U.S. and European sanctions.

Officially, the United States has aimed crippling sanctions at high-level Iranian officials by prohibiting oil exports and shutting off access to international banking. In reality, sanctions have devastated ordinary Iranians by driving up inflation and making imported medicine impossibly expensive, among other problems.

On a trip to Iran, I visited a government-operated pharmacy in Tehran, one of the last stops for Iranians seeking affordable drugs. The waiting room was jammed and the line went out the door. Many left angrily when they found out their medicine was unavailable.

Tahereh Karimi, a woman standing in line, acknowledged that officially pharmaceuticals are excluded from the sanctions. But, she told me, the United States steps up pressure on ordinary people in hopes popular discontent will squeeze the government.

"The U.S. knows what it is doing," Karimi said. "Tell Obama not to hurt ordinary people."

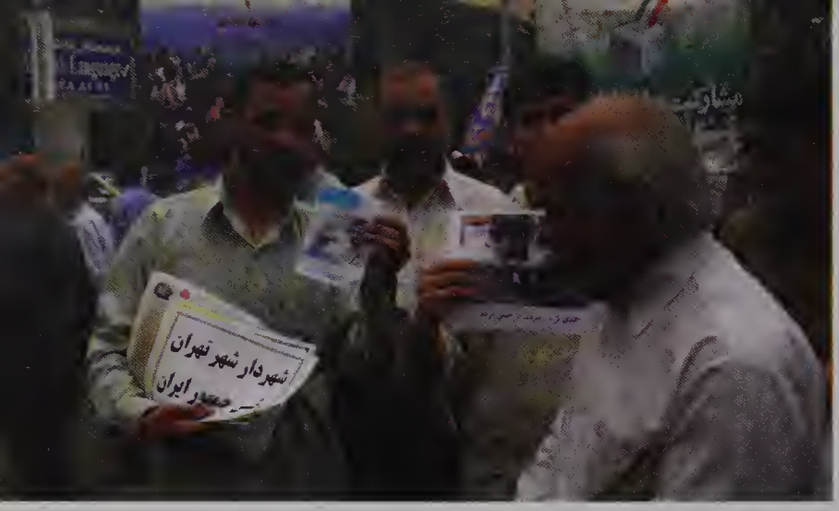
Journalist Ziabari expresses the anger of many Iranians when he says, "I can't understand what the sin is of that poor diabetic or cancer patient who should be deprived of the vital medicine. When you cut off all kinds of transactions with the Iranian banks, then it also means thousands of Iranian students studying abroad cannot get money from their families at home."

Iranian officials insist that major sanctions must be lifted when a final agreement is signed. The United States maintains that sanctions will only be lifted when Iran actually reduces the number of uranium centrifuges, allows inspections of nuclear sites, and lives up to other commitments. That process could take months or even years.

The United States also wants IAEA inspectors to visit conventional military bases where the United States suspects Iran may have stored illicit supplies or done nuclear research.

That raises a red flag for Iran's

Foreign correspondent Reese Erlich writes regularly for The Progressive. *His latest book is* Inside Syria: The Backstory of Their Civil War and What the World Can Expect, *with a foreword by Noam Chomsky.*



(Left) Former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad increased Iran's nuclear program, but his policies ultimately angered many Iranians. Here, supporters campaign for Ahmadinejad during presidential elections. (Right) U.S. and European sanctions are supposed to pressure Iranian officials but in reality drive up prices for food and medicine for ordinary people.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. He has said that Iran won't allow "infiltration of the security and defense realm of the state under the pretext of inspection."

This issue could loom large in implementing any final accord because the United States could use it as a means to postpone the lifting of sanctions. The Bush Administration used similar arguments to insist that Iraq open all its military bases for inspection to prove Saddam Hussein had no weapons of mass destruction.

Hossein Shariatmadari, the editor of the hard-line *Kayhan* newspaper, wrote in an editorial, "Many of our commitments in Lausanne are not reversible. The only solution is to disregard the Lausanne agreement."

However, Khamenei is hedging his bets. In mid-April, he declared that he neither supported nor opposed the political framework and was waiting for a final accord.

In the meantime, the mere possibility of a nuclear agreement has allowed Iranians to consider greater cooperation with the United States. Khamenei said if the United States negotiates honestly on the nuclear accord, "It's possible to negotiate with them on other issues."

The United States and Iran already have a de facto alliance in Iraq fighting a common enemy, the Islamic State. Journalist Ziabari argues there could be similar intersecting interests in other countries threatened by extremist groups.

"Iran and the United States can be allies," he says, "and I believe they are not destined to remain enemies forever."

Taking a more skeptical view, Ghashghavi, who also helps organize an annual Tehran conference denouncing U.S. imperialism, doubts that a nuclear agreement will change Washington's policies. Iran sees U.S. drone strikes and support for the Saudi Arabian bombing of Yemen as acts of aggression.

"Washington is the biggest state sponsor of terror, not just in the Middle East region but throughout the world," says Ghashghavi. Iran could cooperate with the United States regionally but only if the Obama Administration "actually modifies its deeply flawed foreign policy."

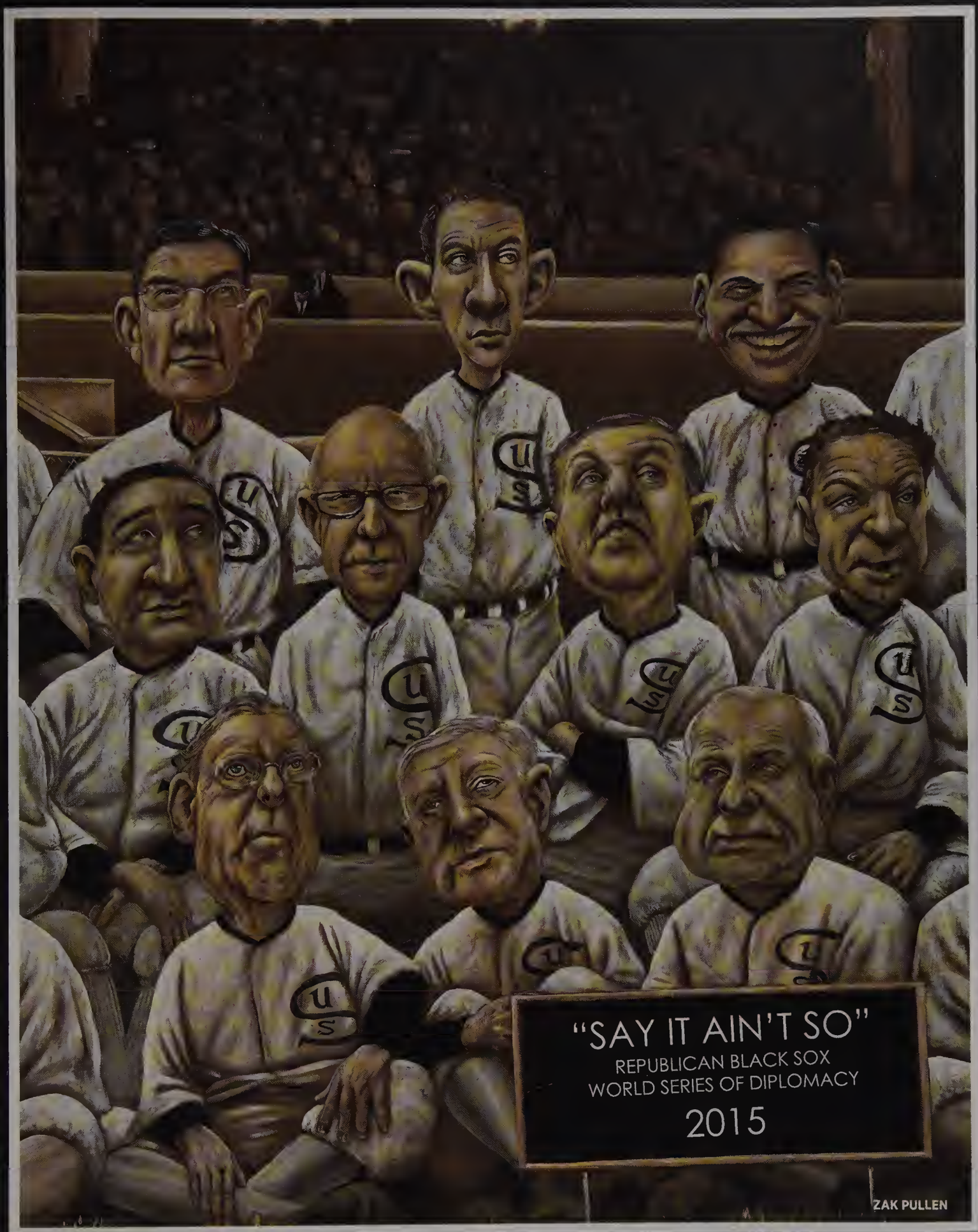
Negotiations on a final accord could continue up to or beyond the June 30 deadline. A Congressional review will certainly complicate the process.

According to Professor Sahimi, Iranians believe the proposed Congressional review is the latest attempt by Israel and the Saudi Arabia lobby, and their supporters in Congress, to block an agreement. Iranians believe that U.S. conservatives "want war, not a diplomatic resolution of the issue," he says.

Nevertheless, the Iranians will continue to negotiate, says Sahimi, on the assumption that the United Nations will lift sanctions regardless of actions by Congress.

Iranian leaders are prepared for the nuclear talks to go either way. They are willing to curtail their nuclear power program in return for lifting sanctions. If the talks fail, they assume other countries will hold the United States responsible and hope they will unilaterally lift their sanctions.

"If the United States continues targeting Iran with sanctions and punitive measures while getting so many important nuclear concessions," Ziabari says, "then the United States will be blamed by the community of nations." ◆



Senators Barrasso, Cotton, Rubio (top) Cruz, Roberts, Graham, and Paul (middle) McConnell, Hatch, and McCain (bottom) were among the signers of an "Open Letter to the Islamic Republic of Iran" explicitly undermining the Obama Administration's nuclear negotiations. "Anything not approved by Congress is a mere executive agreement," the Senators wrote, and the next President could revoke it "with the stroke of a pen." Plus, "President Obama will leave office in January 2017, while most of us will remain in office well beyond then—perhaps decades."

End of the Nightstick

by Maya Dukmasova

"You don't put a shotgun in a man's mouth and split his upper lip and chip his two teeth unless you've been doing it for a while," Darrell Cannon says to a small group gathered for a teach-in at the Poetry Foundation in downtown Chicago. "You don't use the electric cattle prod on a man unless you've been doing it for a while. These things that I just described are things that were done to me."

Maya Dukmasova is a writer and photographer based in Chicago who writes about issues affecting low-income communities and people of color. Her work has appeared in Jacobin, *the* Chicago Reader, Harper's, *and* In These Times. *She can be contacted via Twitter @ mdoukmas.*

Next to him, young poets Kristiana Colón, Britteney Black Rose Kapri, and Malcolm London (all three recently published in the groundbreaking anthology *The BreakBeat Poets: New American Poetry in the Age of Hip-Hop)* sit with downcast eyes. We've just watched a documentary about police violence in Chicago. The grainy footage is more than twenty years old, but the film could have been made yesterday.

The End of the Nightstick memorializes the victims of former Chicago Police commander Jon Burge and chronicles the quest to bring him to justice. Between 1972 and 1991, Burge and detectives under his leadership tortured more than 100 black men and women, including Cannon. Burge used a hand-cranked generator and other devices to electrocute victims on the ears, fingers, legs, and genitals. To extract confessions, Burge and his men also suffocated suspects with plastic bags, beat them, and staged mock executions.

Prosecutors used the extracted confessions to convict the victims, and, in some cases, send them to death row for murders they did not commit. Cannon spent twenty-four-and-a-half years in prison as a result of the false confession tortured out of him by three detectives in November 1983.

Burge was acquitted of torture charges in 1989, but was eventually fired from his job and found guilty of perjury and obstruction of justice. He served less than four years in prison. He now lives in Florida and continues to receive his police pension. In Chicago, activism in response to his crimes persists. Poets gathered for this teach-in on the eve of the City Council's historic hearing on a reparations ordinance for Burge's victims.

Police brutality did not start or end with Burge, and in communities of color there is a long history of organized protests and creative responses to this phenomenon.

Kapri, Colón, and London join the ranks of Langston Hughes, Audre Lorde, Nikki Giovanni, and many other writers of color who have channeled their painful personal experiences and observations of state-sanctioned violence into poetry and protest.

"Organizing for me is an antidepressant," says London, who cochairs the Chicago chapter of Black Youth Project 100 and performs his poetry nationwide. "Today, what is hopeful is that more and more people are starting to see that the prosecution of one officer or the indictment of one officer or winning a civil case by a couple folks is not the kind of justice that we want to see."

Colón, who is much newer to activism than London, tells the audience that seeing the film "was pretty traumatic." A poet and playwright, she was moved to organize after the fatal shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, last summer. "It's overwhelming to see that before I was even born, the same protest chants that I'm leading downtown have been shouted at the same line of police," she says.

Colón and Kapri are founders of the #LetUsBreathe Collective.

"It started with a night of me being really depressed as I watched the social media response and coverage of not just Mike Brown's shooting but the brutality that followed in response to the protests," explains Colón. "On that night, all I wanted to do is just to drive to Ferguson and stand in front of the police department and shout at it."

Instead, she and Kapri launched a fundraiser to bring gas masks and medical supplies to the protesters in Ferguson. "That decision has drastically reshaped my life," says Colón. The group quickly exceeded its goal with more than $10,000 in donations, and spent weeks organizing caravans of supplies to protesters in the town.

"Organizing and protesting and activism is a better way to respond to the horrors that I see," says Kapri, who also works at Nancy B. Jefferson Alternative School located inside Cook County's Juvenile Detention Center. She says that while many of her colleagues become depressed, she turns to writing to cope. "Writing is a way to organize myself," she says.

Kapri is from the Uptown neighborhood of Chicago and describes growing up in a dual world.

"My mom's a teacher, my stepdad's a lawyer, and my grandma is a former alderman," she says. "On the other side of my family is a bunch of ex-gangbangers and current gangbangers."

Her brother attended sever-

al schools since closed by Mayor Rahm Emanuel, she says.

"My uncles, their houses have been bulldozed," she adds. "They live in communities where there are no mental health facilities and the only thing you have is a liquor store and a church. And if Jesus isn't going to do it for you, then the bottle will."

Last May, London's twenty-three-year-old friend Dominique Franklin stole a bottle of vodka from a Walgreens store. After arresting and handcuffing Franklin, police tasered him with such intensity that he slammed his head into a light pole and died soon thereafter. In response, London and a grassroots campaign called We Charge Genocide traveled all the way to Geneva to present Franklin's story to the U.N. Committee Against Torture.

When news first breaks about a person of color killed or injured by police, it is often in the form of a justification, London says. Stories emerge about the victim's criminal background, along with unflattering photographs: "If I got killed today, you probably would hear that when I was twelve, I stole a candy bar from a store."

In a stirring poem called "No Matter What, LIFE," dedicated to Franklin, London recites: "You weren't an honors student, an upstanding citizen. You *were* stealing alcohol when you got tazed. You can't win any medals with the track record you have. You've hurt people. But you didn't dig your own grave."

The work of We Charge Genocide has attracted considerable media attention. The group continues to speak to audiences about Franklin's death and police brutality.

Meanwhile, Colón's work is now empowering young activists from Ferguson who call themselves Lost Voices to speak out about their experiences with police violence. She has brought theater advisers to Ferguson to help Lost Voices create a live performance piece, "so that they could really be in control of their own narrative."

Darrell Cannon at the Poetry Foundation

Lost Voices has traveled to two college campuses, and Colón continues to help the group fine-tune its program and outreach.

"We have invented a new genre of performance that hybridizes protest, theater, storytelling and video," she says. The goal is to help young people extend their message from the street into the educational sphere.

She hopes this performance piece will "shatter the idea of respectability politics, because [the activists] don't look like Cornel West, they don't look like Tavis Smiley, they don't look like folks from the NAACP, and I think that those are the people and the voices that need to be uplifted."

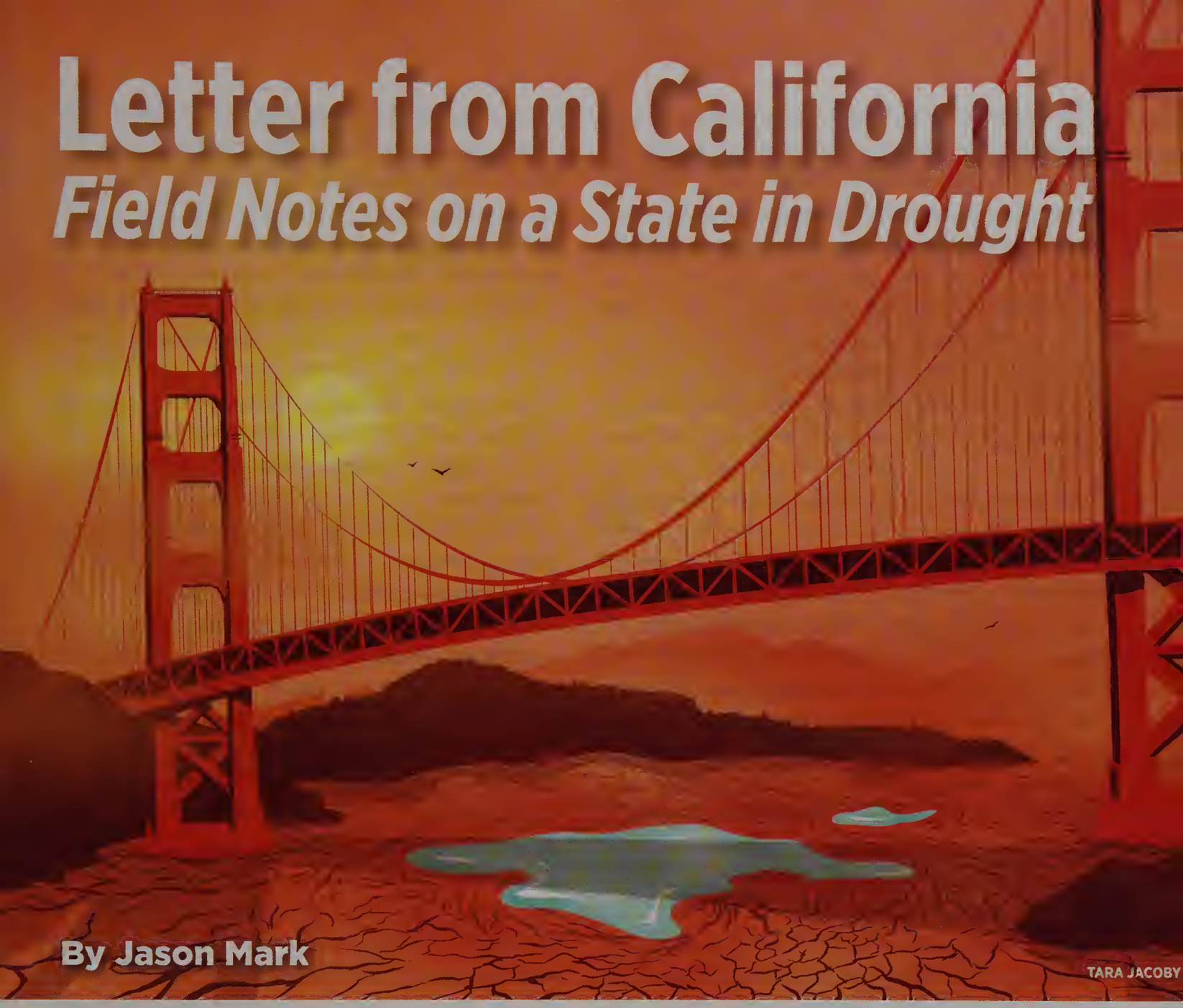
On April 14, the morning after the teach-in, Cannon, members of We Charge Genocide, #LetUsBreathe Collective, and hundreds of others gathered at City Hall for the hearing on the reparations ordinance. Cannon and fellow survivor Anthony Holmes, at times fighting back tears, gave chilling testimonies of the mistreatment they endured.

The City Council was expected to approve the ordinance in May. It would be the first reparations measure created by any American municipality for victims of police violence. In addition to a formal apology from city leadership, the historic ordinance provides $5.5 million to the victims, will build a South Side counseling center geared to their needs, creates a mandatory curriculum on police torture in Chicago public schools, and provides free tuition at city colleges to survivors and their families. The city will also build a memorial to Burge's victims.

In Darrell Cannon's words, "From there, God willing, justice will prevail." ◆

Letter from California

Field Notes on a State in Drought



By Jason Mark

TARA JACOBY

This was the year without a winter.

In January, not a single drop of rain fell in the San Francisco Bay Area, the first time such a thing has happened since recordkeeping began during the Gold Rush. Day after day, the skies were clear and the afternoon temperatures were in the seventies. It was awful. Without any rain or the typical cold winter winds, a thick haze developed over the bay and stuck around for weeks. An orange miasma choked the view from the Berkeley Hills to the Golden Gate, making the sun into a tarnished brass coin.

Jason Mark writes from Oakland, California. He is the editor of Earth Island Journal *and author of* Satellites in the High Country: Searching for the Wild in the Age of Man, *which will be published in September.*

Meteorologists blamed it on something they've dubbed the "Ridiculously Resilient Ridge," a persistent wall of high pressure over the Pacific Ocean that pushed winter storms away from the state and kept temperatures so warm that there was little to no snowfall this year below 8,000 feet of elevation.

Then there's "The Blob." For nearly a year, a mass of warm ocean water as much as two to seven degrees Fahrenheit above normal has clung to the West Coast. The Blob—which stretches 1,000 miles from Mexico to Washington State and goes 300 feet deep into the water column—has contributed to the warm winter, and is likely to be a factor in a predicted hotter-than-average summer.

The weird weather has had many strange effects. My friend Victor complains that at his house he can now see the stars at night. Victor and his family live in San Francisco's Sunset District, on the far west edge of the city, hard against the ocean. Normally this area—dubbed the "Outside Lands" by the first white settlers—is fog-locked much of the year. Now, however, the summer fogs seem less dense, and the recent winters have been infamously cloud-free. "It's really frightening," Victor tells me.

Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist, essayist, and conservationist Wallace Stegner once wrote: "Aridity, more than anything else, gives the western landscape its character." West of roughly the 100th meridian, civilization is impossible—physically impossible—without some sort of system to capture and store water. California, especially its northern sections, may have more of a green tint than the red-and-orange stretches of Arizona, Utah, and Nevada, but this place is still, at best, a semi-desert. In a "normal" year (a phrase that seems increasingly anachronistic) between fifteen and twenty-five inches of rainfall land on most parts of the state. Nearly all of that comes in a brief winter window outside the prime growing season.

"We have tried to make the arid West into what it was never meant to be and cannot remain, the Garden to the World and the home of multiple millions," Stegner wrote in an essay titled, "Striking the Rock." That piece was published in 1987, at the tail end of some of the wetter years ever recorded in the West. In 1985, Fresno—the small city at the heart of the San Joaquin Valley—received more than fifteen inches of rain. This winter, Fresno got just over five inches; last winter, the figure was four.

The central problem is this: The state and federal water systems allocations are based on water we don't have. The numbers on the official paperwork are five times greater than the amount of water in the actual, physical hydrological system. The water allocation figures are fixed to a figment of history, a time when the state was wetter. California has hit overdraft.

"We shouldn't even be talking about 'drought'—it's climate change and the new normal," Conner Everts, a one-time drought manager for the city of Pasadena and now the executive director of the Southern California Watershed Alliance, tells me. "And because we've never managed water properly, when drought comes, we are exposed for allocating water that isn't there. This isn't going away, and it isn't going to be solved easily."

Everyone is anxious. According to a late February poll, 94 percent of registered voters in California say the drought is "serious," and more than two-thirds describe the situation as "extremely serious."

You hear talk about the drought everywhere—people discussing it on the BART train, at the coffee shop, on the radio. Most often, people say it's "weird" or "freaky" or, simply, "scary." The topic comes up all the time, even with strangers. A couple of weeks ago, my partner was making plans for a weekend getaway to wine country, and while she was on the phone with the woman at the inn in Calistoga, a late spring storm rolled over the Napa Valley.

"Is it really going to rain?" the innkeeper said, stopping what she was doing. "Oh, here it comes. Oh, it's raining—thank God."

That shower (about an inch of precipitation) kept the hills green for another ten days.

We Californians are known for our incorrigible (some might say *pathological*) optimism, and so this glimpse of a limit to our once-boundless growth seems vertiginous. The uncertainty makes things worse.

"We don't know if we're in year four of a four-year drought, or year four of a forty-year drought," Mark

Leno, a state senator representing San Francisco, tells me. Data from tree-ring studies reveals that the current drought is the worst to hit California in 1,200 years. This fact would be a consolation of sorts—*the dry spell is just an anomaly!*—were it not for the paleoecologists' confirmation that, according to the fossil record, mega-droughts have been a regular occurrence in western North America for millennia.

Eighty percent of California's "developed water"—water captured and controlled for human uses—goes to agriculture. We are, famously, "America's salad bowl." Half of the country's fruits and vegetables are grown here, including more than 90 percent of the nation's broccoli and strawberries, and three-quarters of carrots, cauliflower, and raspberries. As the drought has settled into the popular consciousness, pistachios and almonds have become a favorite target of derision and disgust—"Lay Off the Almond Milk, You Ignorant Hipsters," a *Mother Jones* online headline shouted. The trees are huge water users (according to one estimate it takes a gallon of water to produce a single almond), and because they are perennials, they can't suddenly be taken out of production like, say, a field of tomatoes or wheat. The fact that much of the pistachios and almonds are exported abroad only adds to the resentment. Shipping water overseas? It seems totally, well, nuts.

But the almond crop isn't the worst water guzzler. That dubious distinction goes to alfalfa, much of which is grown in the Imperial Valley east of San Diego, a sun-baked desert that is arable only because the farmers there receive abundant (and essentially free) water from the Colorado River—which, incidentally, no longer flows to the ocean most years. The alfalfa is grown to feed the state's thousands of dairy cows, California being the leading dairy state in the country.

During the drought, the demand for alfalfa and other irrigated silage has increased. In February of last year, I saw columns of flat-bed semi-trucks hauling stacks of feed to the dairies in Point Reyes, just north of San Francisco. It was a disorienting sight. Normally, at that time of year, the dairy cows would be grazing on verdant hills, but what little rain we had that winter came late, and the farmlands were an ugly brown-grey. And so, in a way, the drought feeds on itself: The lack of water makes it even more lucrative to grow one of the thirstiest crops.

Adam Scow, the California director of Food and Water Watch, warns that the status quo is untenable.

"We need to get water supply and water demand into balance," he tells me. "The State Water Board needs to say: 'Here are the realities, and here's how it's changing on a hotter planet.' Given the reality that the water has all been overallocated, it's going to mean some cutbacks. Everybody is going to make some sacrifices to make this work. It's going to mean some difficult conversations."

Everyone likes to talk about what *they're* doing to conserve water. Restaurants serve water to people only upon request. Some people have taken to placing a plastic bucket in their shower to capture the water that comes out of the showerhead before it heats up, and then using that saved water on their gardens. Farmers like to point out that this year the Central Valley Project, the federal water program administered by the Bureau of Reclamation, has reduced water allocations all the way to zero—not one drop for crops. Last year, farmers in the state kept fallow about 400,000 acres of land. That figure is expected to double in the 2015 growing season.

And yet a kind of denial coexists with the awareness of our predicament. The anxiety hasn't been matched by action. "I've never heard so much talk about water, and seen so little done," Everts says.

The situation feels Hobbesian, a war of all against all that has pitted cities against farms and farms against industry.

Many farmers are having a difficult time facing the facts. At a mid-April symposium on "fostering resilience in the face of drought," I heard an organic walnut grower attack the widely agreed upon statistic that farms use 80 percent of the state's water because, really, half of all precipitation is saved for the environment. So actually, the farmer said, agriculture uses only 40 percent of the state's water. A week later, I caught Paul Wenger, president of the California Farm Bureau, offering this same canard on a radio talk show. (Do the math yourself: If humans use 50 percent of all the state's water, and farmers use 40 percent of the original total, then agriculture

does in fact account for 80 percent of the water used by humans, as reported. Why deploy this obvious sophistry? I can only imagine that it's some kind of attempt to dodge the inevitable redistribution, an effort to forestall the farmland buyouts that some people say are needed.

In all fairness, the urban water managers have behaved little better. When the State Water Board released its initial plan for mandatory cuts, lots of water managers got defensive. The state-mandated reductions, they said, were too demanding and would be bad for business. The city manager of Beverly Hills complained that conservation targets "may ultimately be infeasible." San Diego leaders pointed to the $1 billion they've just dropped on a (hugely energy-intensive) desalination plant as an excuse not to make bigger cuts. Litigation is likely.

In any case, the wealthy are expected to simply pay for the privilege of having a lawn. Silicon Valley's milennial millionaires and the Hollywood swells in Pacific Palisades will barely notice a spike in their water bills. "Rich water wasters slow to turn off tap," the *San Francisco Chronicle* reports, noting that between June 2014 and February 2015 residents in Malibu reduced their water usage by a scant 1 percent. The well-to-do will be able to keep their tender green grass. And the middle class and the poor can landscape with gravel.

Even if the cities reach the state-mandated conservation targets, it will do little to address the fundamentals, given the relatively small amount of water used in urban areas. A 25 percent reduction in urban water use will decrease total state water consumption by less than 3 percent. Governor Jerry Brown's mandate might be well intentioned, but it's incommensurate with the challenge—like telling someone they've got cancer, then recommending plastic surgery.

Meanwhile, the idiocies pile up. In Kern County, oil companies use as much as ten barrels of water to produce one barrel of petroleum, and for years state regulators have allowed the drillers to inject their briny and hydrocarbon-laced wastewater back into aquifers that otherwise would be clean enough to drink. An estimated two-thirds of the state's golf courses still irrigate with potable water instead of reclaimed wastewater. Four major bottled water companies—Arrowhead, Crystal Geyser, Aquafina, and Dasani—are tapped into spring water or municipal water supplies, meaning that people across the United States are drinking water from a drought-wracked state. A recent investigation by *The Desert Sun* found that Nestle Waters, owner of the Arrowhead brand, has been pumping and transporting water from the San Bernardino National Forest without a permit since 1988. The U.S. Forest Service says that examining Nestle's expired permit is now "a priority."

The landscapers are expected to do well by the drought. Ripping out lawns to install drought-tolerant gardens will keep them busy for years. Farm workers are a different story. The Western Growers Association estimates that 17,000 farm jobs were lost last summer as farmland went idle. The unemployment figure is expected to increase to 23,000 this summer. The vast majority of those jobs are held by Latino workers who were struggling to make it before the drought hit.

"We are seeing more need at the food bank, and our funding for drought food assistance only goes through October," Sarah Ramirez, the executive director of FoodLink for Tulare County, said at the drought symposium I attended. Ramirez's parents were farm workers from Mexico, and after getting a Ph.D. from Stanford she decided to return to the Central Valley to serve residents in the community where she grew up. Today, that's more difficult than ever.

"We're having families having to decide between food, medicines, housing, children's clothing, and utilities," she says. "And now you have to throw in paying for water."

In the last couple of years, Ramirez reports, at least 900 wells have gone dry in Tulare County, a sprawl of farmland located between Fresno and Bakersfield. Residents turn on their taps, and nothing comes out. Even before the drought, many poorer families there didn't have access to clean water. Now, statewide, more than one million people don't. Ramirez and others in the farm worker advocacy community say the drought—while a clear threat to people's livelihoods—is also an opportunity to rethink the assumptions underlying the California farm economy, which has always been a plantation system of huge operators reliant on cheap labor.

At least this much is clear: A reckoning is coming.

"There is going to be more idling of land, there is going to be [permanent] retiring of land," John Diener, who farms 5,200 acres of mixed industrial and organic crops on the west side of Fresno County, tells me. "We are trying to get down to a level that we know we can sustain. But I can't tell you what that level is. No one can."

The wells in Tulare County (and many other California rural communities) are going dry because we are pumping too much water out of the ground. Under the old "normal," Californians get about one-third of our water from the Sierra Nevada snowpack. This year there was virtually no snowpack (6 percent of "normal") and barely any the year before. But the water still has to come from somewhere, so we've been taking more and more of it from deep underground. This is ancient water—"fossil water," you could call it—that has built up over the last 20,000 years. Typically, California farms and cities suck between 12 and 15 million acre-feet of water from the ground every year. In the last three years, the number has leapt to between 20 and 25 million acre-feet of groundwater (and those are conservative estimates).

No one has any idea how long such withdrawals can last—that's because, until last year, California had no regulations for groundwater use. Let that sink in: As recently as one year ago, California was the only state in the West without a groundwater law. As Scow of Food and Water Watch said to me, "You can't manage what you don't measure."

When Governor Brown signed the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act into law into September, many newspapers described it (accurately) as "unprecedented" and (less than accurately) as "sweeping." State agencies will have no power to stop local water agencies or private landowners from pumping, even if an aquifer appears heading toward depletion. The water basins won't have to achieve "groundwater sustainability" until 2040—a full generation from now.

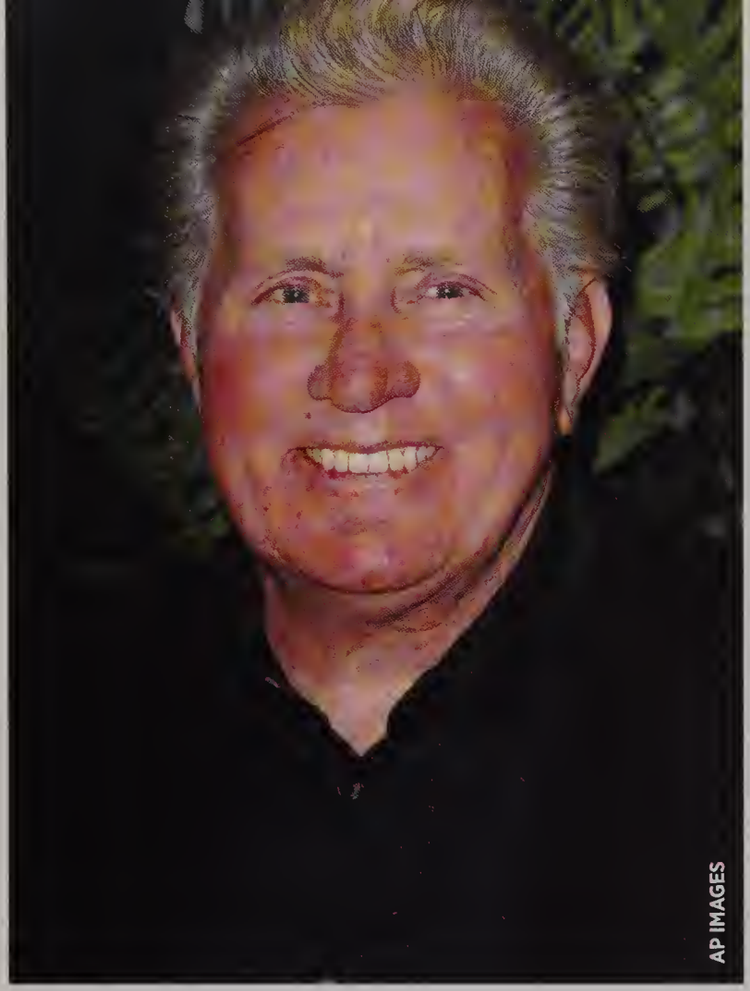
But the signs of stress are already obvious. In the last year alone, the water table has dropped by sixty feet in some parts of the Valley. The groundwater withdrawals have been so vast that they have affected the geology of the whole state. According to a study published last year in the journal *Nature*, the breakneck water mining is causing the Sierra Nevada and Coast Ranges to rise between one and three millimeters per year. During the last century, the southern Sierra Nevada has risen six inches due to groundwater withdrawals. And this mountain uplift, in turn, relieves stress on the San Andreas Fault and, according to geologists, is correlated with increased seismic activity.

"What we find is that when we remove water ... and especially during the last drought conditions, we are essentially unclamping the stresses across the San Andreas fault, and that makes it just ever so slightly easier for earthquakes to happen," U.C.-Berkeley professor Roland Burgmann, one of the co-authors of the *Nature* study, told me in an interview last year. "It just hastens the timing of earthquakes."

Our thirst is literally moving mountains.

Years ago, being good Bay Area hippies, we tore down the fence between our neighbors' place and our own so that there are three families currently sharing one large backyard. I love the communitarian vibe of it all, but recently the shared layout has led to "some difficult conversations," as Adam Scow put it. Sometime in the spring of 2014, I asked my neighbor Tom what he planned to do with his share of the yard, given the unfolding drought. "I'm going to water," he said. And so he did, all summer, even as he and his boys decided to dig a koi pond next to the patio. Most of our side of the yard is taken up by vegetable plots and a cacti-and-succulent garden and a chicken coop, but we do have a twelve-by-twelve section of sod that abuts Tom's lawn, and I had to figure out what I was going to do with it. I opted to let my grass go. By August, it looked horrible, a khaki-colored eyesore next to Tom's swath of resplendent emerald.

But I shouldn't get too self-righteous. The arrangement benefits me nicely. I can have my little patch of virtue and my big lawn, too. And the new koi pond is also a welcome touch. On warm nights, we can hear it through the open bedroom window. I like listening to it burble. The sound reminds of alpine snow melt, of the many times I've gone to bed next to a forest brook. I am sure that somehow the constant babble inhabits my sleep, and keeps me dreaming of water. ◆


AP IMAGES

An Interview with Martin Sheen

By Ed Rampell

A biopic about Martin Sheen—who won a Golden Globe for portraying the liberal President Josiah "Jed" Bartlet on The West Wing*—could be called* The Left Wing. *Affectionately dubbed "the acting President" by Hollywood's social justice advocates, Sheen has long been a voice of conscience. Canadian children's rights campaigner Craig Kielburger quipped that Sheen has "a rap sheet almost as long as his list of film credits." With a record sixty-six times in police custody, in 2010* The Daily Beast *listed Sheen as the "#1 Most Arrested Celebrity."*

Ohio-born Sheen—the son of immigrants—has been nabbed at border checkpoints for helping undocumented Latinos cross into *El Norte*, aided Zapatista children, and supported Cesar Chavez. Sheen played an essential role in the anti-Iraq War movement (this reporter marched beside him at a Hollywood demo). In 2007, Sheen was apprehended with thirty-eight other anti-nuclear protesters at the Nevada test site. Sheen has also supported PETA, Earth First, and Help Darfur Now. In 2008, Sheen was awarded the University of Notre Dame's Laetare Medal and Stella Adler Studio of Acting's Marlon Brando Award for excellence in the arts

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L.A.-based film historian/critic Ed Rampell is The Progressive's *"Man in Hollywood." He has interviewed many actors, writers, and directors for* The Progressive, *including Oliver Stone, Laura Poitras, Costa-Gavras, Ken Burns, Danny Glover, Tom Morello, Ed Asner, W.S. Merwin, Cenk Uygur, Margarethe von Trotta, Joyce Carol Oates, America Ferrera and Michael Peña for his review of Cesar Chavez. The new book Rampell co-authored is* The Hawaii Movie and Television Book *(see: http://hawaiimtvbook.weebly.com/).*

and a life devoted to social engagement.

Although Sheen has appeared in his share of escapist entertainments, such as *The Amazing Spider-Man*, the activist actor has often put his money where his mouth is (which he once taped shut to protest NBC's efforts to censor its pacifist *West Winger*). Many of Sheen's movie and TV productions reflect the causes he promotes. Sheen played the only World War II deserter court-martialed and executed in the TV movie *The Execution of Private Slovik* and was in *Gandhi*. He depicted the eponymous homeless advocate in the made-for-TV movie *Samaritan: The Mitch Snyder Story*, and acted in the TV movie *Conspiracy: The Trial of the Chicago 8* and the Vietnam vet-themed *The War at Home*. Sheen has also narrated numerous hard-hitting documentaries.

I caught up with the "acting President" to talk about President Obama, Martin Luther King Jr., Dorothy Day, the Berrigans, Oliver Stone, today's Hollywood Left, and his biggest regret. He was supporting his latest project, *Selma*. Sheen turns seventy-five on August 3.

Q: Tell us about *Selma*.

Martin Sheen: The march on Selma was probably the greatest force at the time that forged the Voting Rights Act of 1965. And it may be one of President Johnson's greatest achievements, as well as Reverend King's. Bringing national attention to Selma through nonviolent civil disobedience and the inevitable march from Selma to Montgomery is what focused the country on just how entrenched racism and segregation were in a great many parts of the nation, specifically in Alabama.

The challenge that the Southern Christian Leadership Conference embraced was that they would risk their lives to ensure that future generations had the right to vote. There was so much at stake.

I played one of the heroes: federal judge Frank Minis Johnson. I became aware of his contribution through Robert Kennedy Jr.'s biography of Judge Johnson, which he wrote as part of his thesis from Harvard. He spent quite a bit of time personally with the judge ten years after the fact.

Q: Where was Judge Johnson from?

Sheen: He was from northern Alabama, from the hill country. These people in the mountainous regions of Alabama had been isolated all the way back to the beginnings of the republic. They were Republican, but the expression of their politics would have been anything but conservative Republican. On the contrary, they were extremely liberal and were not swayed by the likes of George Wallace.

In fact, Wallace went to the University of Alabama with Judge Johnson. They were friends in college. And Wallace started out being very progressive, but along the way began to think he could feather his political nest if he sided with the racism of the power grid. That's what he did, and that was the basis for his political movement.

Q: What pivotal role did Judge Johnson play in the events depicted in *Selma*?

Sheen: Mind you, he was a federal judge. The hearing on the march was held in Montgomery in his courtroom. Governor Wallace had forbidden the march with a legal writ, and the judge said he would not overrule it without a hearing. He was a by-the-book, honest, decent man.

He asked the Southern Christian Leadership Conference not to march on that Tuesday. The police riot occurred on a Sunday, March 7. They were planning to march again on Tuesday after that. This is when Reverend King came and led the march and knelt down on the bridge because he feared it was a trap. About forty-eight hours later, they had the hearing. Johnson heard both sides, and he issued his ruling, which was that the march was legal and constitutional. He overruled Wallace and said that the marchers were guaranteed the right of free speech and right of assembly.

Q: You're in another progressive movie released in 2014. Tell us about *Bhopal: A Prayer for Rain*.

Sheen: Thirty years ago, in early December, a gas leak sprung at the Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal, India. And it killed thousands of people in that one

night. Subsequently, over the next twenty-five, thirty years, it killed many more thousands. They estimate that perhaps 25,000 people died as a result of Union Carbide's negligence and greed. It was an overwhelmingly tragic event. It woke up corporate America to the reality of their responsibility—particularly in the Third World.

Q: Describe for us your character and how you researched that role?

Sheen: I played the CEO of Union Carbide at the time. There was not a whole lot of information on him, except that he was this very charming, very bright man who led Union Carbide to some very successful years. When the tragedy happened, he went to India to assess the damage and he was overwhelmed. He was placed under house arrest. Less than twenty-four hours later he escaped, with the help of some highly placed people. He came back to the United States and was never heard from again. Over the ensuing thirty years, there were various extradition efforts to bring him back for trial, and he never responded. The U.S. State Department and Justice Department never cooperated with the Indian government to extradite this guy, William Martin Anderson.

Q: How did you get involved in *Bhopal*?

Sheen: I originally got an offer from a British company. I remembered the event, and I read the script. I tried to contact Anderson to see if he had any comments on the script because it condemned his cowardice. He couldn't find the courage to stand up and at least apologize for what happened and be present to the victims and their families. I didn't want to do a film that trashed him; on the contrary, I wanted him to have a say. But he never came forward—we couldn't find him. Not for lack of trying. Both the production company and myself, personally, tried to find him. We tracked him down to Connecticut, his last known residence. But he did not respond. In fact, he died just this past September; I believe he was about ninety-three. His death was not reported for a couple of weeks because no one knew who he was. He died in a hospice down in Florida. An AP reporter who scans the obituaries of the country spotted his name and investigated. It took him a couple of weeks to prove that it was *the* William Martin Anderson of the Union Carbide debacle.

Q: Did you go to India to do any of the shooting for *Bhopal*?

Sheen: Yeah, I did 90 percent of the filming in Hyderabad, India. We weren't able to go to Bhopal because the groundwater has been destroyed and much of the area is still dealing with the impact of this tragedy. It was thirty years ago. It's already into the second generation. The effects of the tragedy are still going on. Children are being born today with health problems related to the leak.

Q: You won a Golden Globe for playing President Josiah Bartlet in *The West Wing*. You played President Kennedy in the *Kennedy* miniseries. As the "acting President" of Hollywood, what is your assessment of the Obama presidency?

Sheen: He is quite magnificent. His shortcomings are obvious from anyone following his six years in office. We would have hoped that he would have gone after his agenda with far more energy and vigor. I think his patience has been finally worn thin with this Congress and this level of conservatism so clearly evident in our public discourse these days.

I guess you could criticize him for giving the Republicans so much room to maneuver. But I think he will be much more forthright and much more active in the next two years. He even said that himself. I think opening up Cuba is a reflection of where he's going to lead the country.

Q: Obama has moved forward with executive action on immigration. Cuba and this are primarily Latino issues. How has being Hispanic had an impact on you?

Sheen: Well [exhales], my father was Spanish—from Spain. So my real name is Ramón Estevez. I experienced some measure of prejudice growing up. When I

went to New York, there was a great deal of prejudice against the Hispanic community, specifically Puerto Ricans. And I was kind of grouped in that prejudice. So, I never changed my name—it's still Ramón in all the official documents, all the kids were born with my name, I was married under that name [to Janet—they've been married more than fifty years]. My passport and driver's license are under Ramón Estevez. I've never officially changed it but I just started using Sheen [his mother was an immigrant from Galway, Ireland] to try and get out of the shadow of the prejudice I saw in New York.

And it's the one big regret I have in my life. I wished I would have stuck it out. In fact, many years later, when Emilio was thinking about becoming an actor and changing his name I begged him to reconsider, which, thank God, he did. I assured him the industry had changed, the country had changed, the world had changed.

Q: Your impressive career includes *Apocalypse Now*, which is set in the Vietnam War. Martin Luther King said President Johnson's War on Poverty was being lost in Vietnam.

Sheen: Not only was the War on Poverty, but the whole nature of our spiritual being was being destroyed by that war. And in the speech Reverend King gave on April 4, 1967, at Riverside Church he came out very strongly against the war. In a lot of people's minds it sounded his death knell. Because he was, from then on, opposing the Administration he had been able to work with through civil rights. But he departed from the administration in 1967 when he declared the war "immoral." He felt that we were losing our soul.

Q: What do you want to say about the ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq?

Sheen: I opposed the first Gulf War, very strongly, and George W. Bush's war in Iraq. It's only pointed up the futility of war. The level of violence, destruction, and human bereavement in all of those countries—in Iraq, Afghanistan and now in Syria—just breaks your heart. Jesus, it's just so hard to rationalize any of the killing. Killing is killing. And most of the victims are innocent. There's just nothing good you can say about a war.

Q: Your *Apocalypse Now* co-star Marlon Brando was known for his activism. Can you share any personal memories?

Sheen: They are all very tender and loving. To have worked with him was one of the most satisfying experiences of my career. We stayed friends until his death. I just adored him—his humanity and his great sense of humor and involvement in people's lives. He was actually a very shy man, I was surprised to learn, as I came to know him over the years.

His involvement in social justice goes back to the beginnings of his career, with Reverend King and the movement and Harry Belafonte. He and Harry were great friends; they both began their careers in New York. He changed a lot of people's point of view on a lot of issues.

Q: In addition to narrating *JFK*, you co-starred in 1987's *Wall Street*. What was it like working with Oliver Stone?

Sheen: I was very fond of him. You know, my son Charlie put me in touch with him—it was Charlie's idea for me to play the part. And when I met Oliver, he agreed that this would be a very short distance for father and son. [Laughs.] So I'm grateful to Charlie, as much as to Oliver, for bringing that to me. That film still has a resonance today with what happened recently with the stock market crash and all of the economic villainy that came down as a result. *Wall Street* the movie was talking about that long before, and we still haven't advanced much from our greed.

Q: You have a role in what's being called *The Warren Beatty Project*. What can you tell us about that upcoming Warren Beatty movie?

Sheen: I don't know what it's called yet. He directed it and wrote it. It's quite extraordinary. I became very fond of him. I had worked with Annette Bening and would

see him at this function or that. But I never worked with him until this. He plays the aviator Howard Hughes, and he asked me to play the guy that formed his company and served him for almost thirty years.

Q: You've been active on many issues. How about on police violence?

Sheen: I was very moved by the demonstrations, particularly in New York, against the killing of Eric Garner in Staten Island. I thought that was just so discouraging that they didn't even reprimand that officer. Under those circumstances, I felt that the demonstrations were warranted. The police departments around the country have to respond in a more humane way. Otherwise, it's going to get worse.

Q: Where does activism stand in the entertainment community nowadays?

Sheen: It's taken a decidedly different form. Some of it is very sophisticated, and I'm very encouraged by people like George Clooney. His whole focus is on the African situation and the Sudan government. He's purchased a satellite.

Q: Clooney's actually surveilling...

Sheen: Yes. So northern Sudan can't lie about [military raids]. He's just one example, but a very powerful one. I think of Angelina Jolie, going into so many of these places to bring attention to poverty and injustice, particularly against women and children. She is very encouraging, and no less is her husband, Brad Pitt, who is very active. He doesn't make a big public display about it. In New Orleans, he was there to help rebuild the city and was present on a deeply personal level. He's very involved in social justice.

Mark Wahlberg and Leonardo DiCaprio—these young guys, some of the biggest movie stars in the world, are also very active in social justice, particularly with the environment, education, and the Third World. They're not so much inclined to protest publicly or to be arrested, but what they're doing is no less powerful.

Q: In terms of career and social causes, what's next for Martin Sheen?

Sheen: I don't know, frankly. I don't separate one issue from another and it is all kind of nourished in my faith. I'm a practicing Catholic, I came back to the church in 1981, and I found the union of spirituality and social justice activism to be very strong. I couldn't do it without a spiritual base.

I was really inspired by the Berrigan brothers—Dan and Phil Berrigan—and the Eastern peace movement, the New York scene with *The Catholic Worker*. I'm very involved with *The Catholic Worker* here in Los Angeles. All my adult life, I've been nourished by the heroes of social justice in our country. Whether it was Dorothy Day . . .

Q: Weren't you in a movie about her?

Sheen: [Laughs.] Yeah. I don't know how good a movie it was, but we did a movie about her early life [1996's *Entertaining Angels: The Dorothy Day Story* starring Moira Kelly with Sheen as Peter Maurin, co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement].

Q: Do you have any upcoming films?

Sheen: *Trash*. I did it last year at Rio. It's from a very sophisticated children's book. It won the Rome Film Festival not too long ago. It's directed by Stephen Daldry, who directed *Billy Elliot*. It's about these three kids who live in the worst garbage dump in the world and how one day they find some treasure in the trash heap that changes everything. I play an American missionary working in a mission there at the trash heap.

Q: Do you seek out films that reflect your activism?

Sheen: I'm drawn to them. If something has a moral reference to what's going on in the world and it has a point of view that's consistent with social justice, I'm inclined to go in that direction. ◆

Funny Business at The Daily Show

When Jon Stewart announced that he would be leaving *The Daily Show*, fans, both famous and "not so much," tweeted their encomiums. I would have, too, but that Twitter world can turn on you for the nicest thing. No wonder innocuous kitty videos are so popular. More on Twitlandia later in our discussion of Trevor Noah, the recently named host-to-be of *The Daily Show*.

After sixteen years of making hard work look easy, Jon must be tired. Night after night, he has been a civic rhetorician parsing political terms of art and a public defender with access to the world's best video archive of evidence.

Of course, Jon has had a great Emmy-winning, mostly male writing team, but great material doesn't deliver itself. He has had a great roster of "reporters" that he seemed genuinely to enjoy and has generously made them look great.

News of Stewart's departure surely made the right breathe a sigh of relief. They will deny it. See: Bull O'Really. But as this season's *Game of Thrones* presidential election looms, the left will miss him, especially with the bloviating Stephen Colbert retooling himself for David Letterman's job.

For years, I have called for a woman to be a late-night network host. The unspoken theory is that testosterone looks best at night. Estrogen is for daytime use only. I lobbied for Jessica Williams, the young, hilarious feminist and race reporter on the *The Daily Show*. She knows the ropes and the tropes, and would have been a perfect in-house promotion, the new Queen of Meme. She humbly, graciously nipped our lobbying in the butt. Sigh.

Comedy Central's choice of Trevor Noah, a thirty-one-year-old South African, surprised many, but he has the chops. He is an internationally known stand-up star. He has years of experience on radio and television. He's a wordsmith and a polyglot with killer accents. With Noah, Comedy Central is hoping to shore up the coveted eighteen-to-thirty-four-year-old male demographic that has been leaching to Jimmy Fallon on *The Tonight Show*. Fallon is Mr. Entertainment. He is talented but saccharine, so different from the sharp, bitter after-taste from David Letterman. I'll miss it. It helped me sleep.

Somehow, Noah is not bitter. He is insightful, sly, and laid back, yet quicksilver. He is the son of a black African mother and a white Swiss father. He gives a nod to his likeness President Obama. Noah Drama Obama. His racial identity has been reclassified three times in his lifetime. He will go there with fearless frankness.

The night I saw Noah perform in a small theater in New York City, his practiced skills allowed him to tackle topics—racism, domestic violence, terrorism—that made the audience, and me, clench up. But we were willing to go there with him. You trust the guy.

Noah is a brilliant choice. If given a chance, I'm sure he will be able to hold the young male demographic, even the white majority of it. Hold on, Doubting Clarence Thomases. I'm not suggesting affirmative action. Comedy Central's strong, quick defense of Noah against the sniping Twitter backlash is what I mean.

A few news cycles after Noah had been named, a former middle school hall monitor with too much time on his hands found some old tweets of Noah's deemed offensive. As an actual lesbian, I was fine with his tweet that watching the NCAA Women's Hockey Finals was like watching lesbian porn. First of all, he was watching. Second, what the puck?

Noah, who knows actual sniper fire, responded to the pusillanimous, anonymous bilge, "To reduce my views to handful of jokes that didn't land is not a true reflection of my character, nor my evolution as a comedian."

What I admire most about Noah's work is that he does not bifurcate serious and funny. Funny is serious. Serious is funny. He will make you laugh-gasp for air. He'll say, "Terrorism isn't a face. It's an act," and it sounds like a punchline, not preaching. ◆

Kate "Twitter gives me acid reflux" Clinton writes for The Progressive every other month.

Toughness and Love

Every year, the legendary sports and social justice activist Richard Lapchick hands out one of the most prestigious awards on the high school coaching landscape: the Giant Steps Award. Officially bestowed by Lapchick's University of Central Florida's National Consortium for Academics and Sports, it is given to the coach who "uses sport as a vehicle for positive social change."

This year, in the basketball category, the Giant Steps Award did not go to some high-profile NCAA head honcho. Instead it was won by someone who has never even been the head coach at the college or even the high school level. Lapchick and his institute honored Shawn Harrington, a humble assistant coach at Marshall High School in Chicago. (People might remember Marshall High as the public high school at the heart of the 1994 documentary *Hoop Dreams*.)

Why Harrington? Because there is simply no one quite like him. Last year, Harrington, a former star at Marshall who returned home to become an assistant coach, took a bullet to the spine near the school on Chicago's West Side. He was shot while laying his body over his young daughter, protecting her from harm. He is still an assistant coach at Marshall, but taking care of business from the vantage point of a wheelchair.

I spoke to Harrington, and words cannot do justice to the amount of positivity he exudes. I could hear Harrington glow over the phone as he expressed both his shock and joy at being recognized by Lapchick.

"I'm truly, totally still in awe," he said. "I'm really just taking it all in and counting the blessings along the way because it's truly a blessing, one of the many blessings I've received on account of this ordeal."

One of these blessings has been the support he has received from the Marshall community (he never doubted that he would have his position waiting for him when he emerged from the hospital) and the ability to forge a different kind of relationship with his players.

In a neighborhood that has seen more than its share of violence, the players are "more attentive to me when I'm talking now, as crazy as that may sound," he said. "I just know that I'm a perfect example of 'if it can happen to me, it could happen to anyone, anywhere, anytime.' So they listen when I say to them to just be a little more aware.

"I also speak with the student athletes just about being leaders in the community," he added. "Our basketball players and our coaches are the most popular guys in the inner city, in their neighborhoods and outside their neighborhoods. And we need to use our faces and use our voices in a positive way, trying to curb some of the violence that's going on here in Chicago."

I also spoke to Rus Bradburd, one of Shawn's college coaches when he played Division I hoops at New Mexico State.

"Everybody likes Shawn, and everyone has always liked Shawn," Bradburd said. "He was the prototypical tough Chicago point guard but also a lovable guy. I think those qualities of toughness but also sort of caring and loving, that's what our best coaches are, as well as our best leaders."

I asked Shawn, half-jokingly, if his players would describe him as lovable, and he said without hesitation "most definitely." Caring about others is not a joking matter for Shawn Harrington. It sustains him through the hours of physical therapy he still has to endure.

"I preach family like we always have at Marshall," he said. "A lot of people say different things when you come into a huddle, but as long as I've been there, we always break with 'Family on three.' "

Shawn Harrington's award is a recognition that this is someone who has given so much when others might have just given up. That is why in his most difficult moments, there is a line of people, a family, ready to return the love. ◆

Dave Zirin is the host of Sirius XM Radio's popular weekly show Edge of Sports Radio *and the sports editor for* The Nation. *His latest book is* Brazil's Dance with the Devil.

POEM by ISHION HUTCHINSON

Return to the Volcano Island

With continuous rain
he paints the sea, joints
swollen, his wrist gradual,
tight strokes of slate, wheat,
the impressionist disease,
in old age, ablaze in him.

All is yellow, the eroding
cough; he writhes like a radiant
serpent, seared by the sun.
Rain colludes the canvas;
paralysis; the eaves hiss
and lightning clarifies his sins,

unmakes the road rehearsed
all his life, the impossible
return to the first gesture,
when words said what he saw,
soldered the page to bones
picked from the sea.

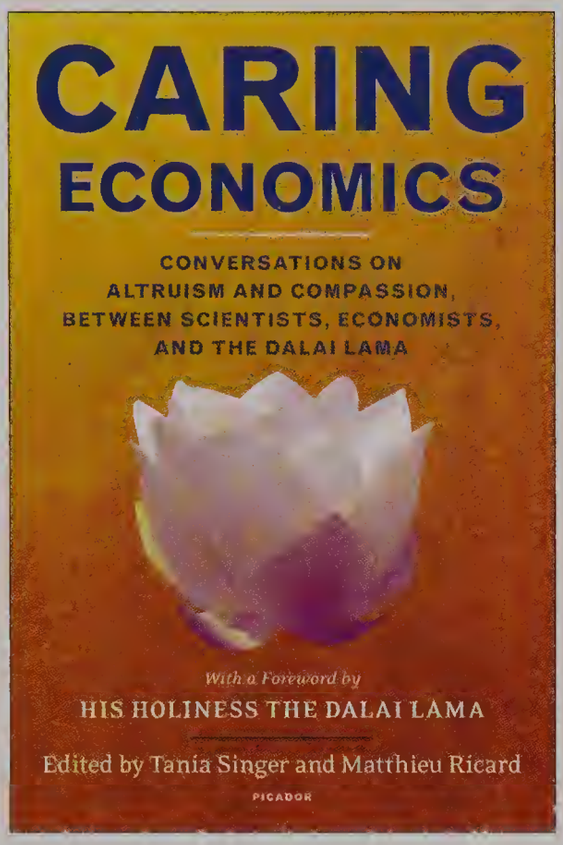
His endless looking misses
the fish-gut air, that lansan
tree threshing with his own
sound, contradicting history.
Next morning azure, lucent
since early, lilac in the backyard,

virulent on the fence
are oblique daisies the steel
of his eyes. He reads changes.
Baudelaire's century. A funeral
on the women. He reels, harried
north to survive. Scissors clips

the heat and sews silhouettes
of friends time cannot repair.
The pallid leaves tremble,
confabulate betrayals in his palms;
his mind retreats to the gnarl
almond shade that glitters

angrily in the sea. "The vain
travail..." where is it from, where?
He wishes to rise, to drown
the book, but the day's volcano
erupts with birds, comfort
enough, weeping as they sing.

Ishion Hutchinson was born in Port Antonio, Jamaica. His poetry collection, Far District: Poems *(2010), won the PEN/Joyce Osterweil Award. Other honors include a Whiting Writers' Award, the Glenna Luschei Award from Prairie Schooner Journal and the Academy of American Poets' Larry Levis Prize. He is an assistant professor of English at Cornell University.*



The Science of Altruism

By Jake Whitney

Caring Economics: Conversations on Altruism and Compassion Between Scientists, Economists, and the Dalai Lama
Edited by Tania Singer and Matthieu Ricard
Picador. $26. 230 pages.

The editors of *Caring Economics* want us to reassess everything we know about money and the economy.

The book focuses on a 2010 economics conference in Zurich, Switzerland, organized by the Mind and Life Institute, which advocates the fusion of science and Buddhism. The Dalai Lama (a founder of the Institute), professors of sociology and psychology, and several of the world's top neuroscientists and economists discuss the flaws in our current financial system and ideas for a new one.

Neuroscientist Tania Singer and Matthieu Ricard, a Buddhist monk who holds a Ph.D. in cellular genetics, condense the conference's key ideas to construct a striking argument: Modern economics must evolve from a Western-dominated philosophy of self-interest to a Buddhist-influenced one that incorporates altruism.

To some, this will sound naive and impractical. But Singer and Ricard are not suggesting that we dismantle capitalism—just rethink it. Whether this can be accomplished is another matter. Significant questions are left unanswered: How do we go about establishing a caring economic system? Given that so many powerful interests are invested in the current model, is it even remotely possible? Indeed, the biggest problem with *Caring Economics* is that it offers no clue about how to begin implementing the ideas it advocates. But make no mistake: These are stirring ideas.

Incorporating altruism, the book argues, is the only way to build a sustainable economic model—one that eschews greed and risk. Neuroscientists are brought into the discussion to present evidence—in the form of social experiments and brain scans—that humans can be just as happy being altruistic as being selfish. And no matter what economic model we're talking about, the book argues, we should all have the same goal: To make the most human beings as happy as possible.

Through its clever use of neuroscience to make its case, *Caring Economics* stands out.

"Simply preventing another financial crisis is not enough," the editors write in the introduction. "Around the world, young people and families, scholars and workers, activists and politicians are calling for a more caring, sustainable, equitable economy—one that does not accommodate the desires of a few elites but benefits the world's

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Jake Whitney is a journalist based in New York. In addition to The Progressive, *his work has appeared in* The New Republic, The Daily Beast, *and* The San Francisco Chronicle.

community through compassion and humanitarianism."

Singer and Ricard present an in-depth discussion of the concept of happiness.

Despite increasing aggregate wealth, happiness levels in the United States have flatlined, they write. Studies have shown that people become happier as they get wealthier—but only to a point; once the basics of life are satisfied, this direct relationship stops. And other studies have shown that the wealthiest people are often the least considerate. This correlation between wealth and decreased empathy does not bode well for a system in which the rich have the most political power and can shape laws to benefit themselves at the expense of the majority.

A tenet of our current model is that pursuing self-interest is the best way to become happy. This, the book argues, is the chief flaw in our system. On the contrary, happiness can best be achieved through altruism—which the psychologists and neuroscientists go to great lengths to prove. And because the pursuit of self-interest has resulted time and again in financial disasters, self-interest, ultimately, is antithetical to a system designed to benefit the greatest number of people.

This is a compelling argument. Too bad the science is presented in such a dry manner. For example, the editors include a speech by University of Wisconsin Professor Richard Davidson, who discusses how meditation can alter the brain's chemistry and improve altruism. But this is how Davidson puts it: "Compassion training down regulates the amygdala; less amygdala signal at the second brain scan predicts greater distribution of wealth. When you put both the amygdala and the insula together, there's a very strong prediction."

Fortunately, in the book's second half, the science is presented in a much more accessible way. It addresses the question why social programs and charity are not sufficient to create an equitable financial system. Here we are introduced to Ernst Fehr, the chairman of Economics at the University of Zurich, who conducted experiments that examined why people were willing to pay taxes and make other contributions to the public good. His results showed that most people will give altruistically as long as they believe others are doing so. But once people believe that others are "free riding"—contributing nothing to the public good yet benefitting from it—then they themselves stop giving.

The way to confront this, say Singer and Ricard, is to place less emphasis on competition and individualism and more on cooperation and fostering a sense of "sameness." This is where Buddhism enters the picture in full force, and where the book's prescriptions break altogether from Western economic theory.

John Dunne, a religion professor at Emory University, explains Buddhist economics like this: "Generosity is always a win-win game" because the person you give to wins in an external manner, and you win by feeling good internally. "This is perhaps the main message of Buddhist economics—that there's a new way to configure our economic exchanges so that we have many more win-win opportunities," he says.

OK, this sounds nice. But I would have liked to see an outline for an implementation program. The book feels incomplete.

What the book offers instead are companies and entrepreneurs that have incorporated these principles. They are uplifting stories, to be sure, but it's far from clear that they augur the beginning of a revolution, as the book implies.

There is a point that truly resonates in *Caring Economics*, however. It's the role that envy plays in our current economic model. What humans really care about, it turns out, is not just getting richer, but getting richer relative to our peers. This is why happiness levels have flatlined: No matter how much wealth we acquire in aggregate, there will always be some winners and lots of losers. This constant drive to out-acquire our neighbors is devouring our resources and wreaking havoc on the environment. It is unsustainable. Meanwhile, happiness derived from internal values, the book argues, is limitless.

"When material development is concerned there are always limitations, so in that field it's better to practice contentment," says the Dalai Lama. "With mental development, there's no limitation, so it's better not to have contentment there and try to further develop, further develop, further develop."

Compassion, altruism, inner peace—we can always do better at these. Other's successes in these areas do not diminish our own. On the contrary, other people's triumphs make us happier, too. A win-win for all of us. ◆

Another Trade Scam

A cabal of global corporations and their friends in the Obama Administration are waging a wholesale assault on our jobs, environment, health, and even our people's sovereignty.

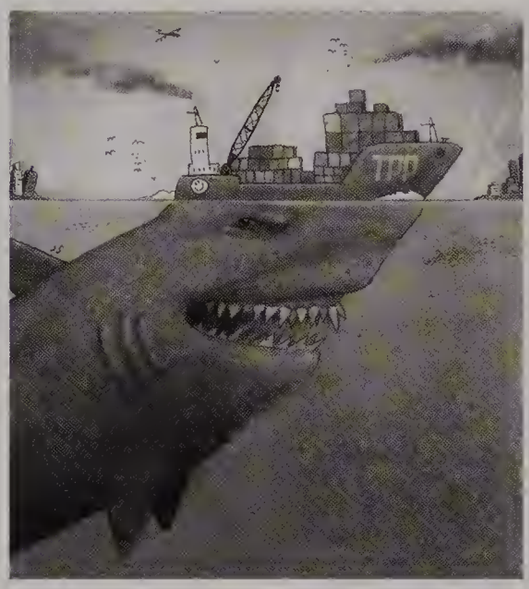
Their weapon is a scheme hidden inside a scam. Called the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the scam is their claim that TPP is nothing but another free trade deal that ties our economy to Brunei, Vietnam, and nine other nations around the Pacific Rim. But of the twenty-nine chapters in this deal, only five are about tariffs and other trade matters.

The real deal is in the twenty-four other chapters that create a supranational scheme of secretive, private tribunals that corporations from any TPP nation can use to challenge and overturn our local, state, and national laws. All a corporate power has to do to win in these closed proceedings is to show that a particular law or regulation might reduce its future profits.

This is big stuff, amounting to the enthronement of a global corporate oligarchy over us. Yet it's been negotiated among trade officials of the twelve countries and 500 corporate executives in strict secrecy.

In March, the President arranged a briefing to woo House Democrats to support the TPP. But he classified the briefing as a secret session, meaning the lawmakers are not allowed to tell you, me, or anyone else anything about it.

A gag order on Congress? Holy Thomas Paine! The only reason Obama is desperate to hide his oligarchic scheme from us is because



JEM SULLIVAN

he knows the people would overwhelmingly oppose it. So he's resorting to government by sucker punch. It's cowardly—and disgraceful.

The wonkish, gibberishistic jargon in these corporate boondoggles they call "trade deals" is toothachingly boring and incomprehensible. Could that be on purpose? Of course! If they wrote these wage-destroying, environment-killing, sovereignty-sucking scams in plain English so we commoners could understand what they're doing to us, they couldn't get away with it.

So the TPP, by far the largest trade flim-flam in history, is written in legalistic gobbledygook and was negotiated by corporate lobbyists and government lawyers. Even Congress doesn't know what's in it—yet the plan is to hustle TPP into law through a super-rushed, rubber-stamped process called "fast-track."

No need to worry about the content, though, for an upstanding new group called Progressive Coalition for American Jobs now assures us that this global deal "will support hundreds of thousands of new jobs in the United States." Hello! Do we have sucker wrappers around our heads? That's the exact same claim that President Clinton and the corporate elite made in 1993 for NAFTA, which siphoned hundreds of thousands of jobs and entire industries *out* of the United States.

Who are the members of this "coalition"? Every progressive group I know of is adamantly against the TPP, and no progressive has stepped forward to claim ownership of this PR push.

"Good trade agreements can only be negotiated in the open," write Representatives Raúl Grijalva and Keith Ellison, co-chairs of the Congressional Progressive Caucus. "The U.S. must stop using trade agreements as investment deals for the world's wealthiest corporations and instead prioritize higher wages, safer work and environmental standards and a healthier world economy."

Now that's progressive. ◆

Jim Hightower produces The Hightower Lowdown *newsletter and is the author, with Susan DeMarco, of* Swim Against the Current: Even a Dead Fish Can Go With the Flow.

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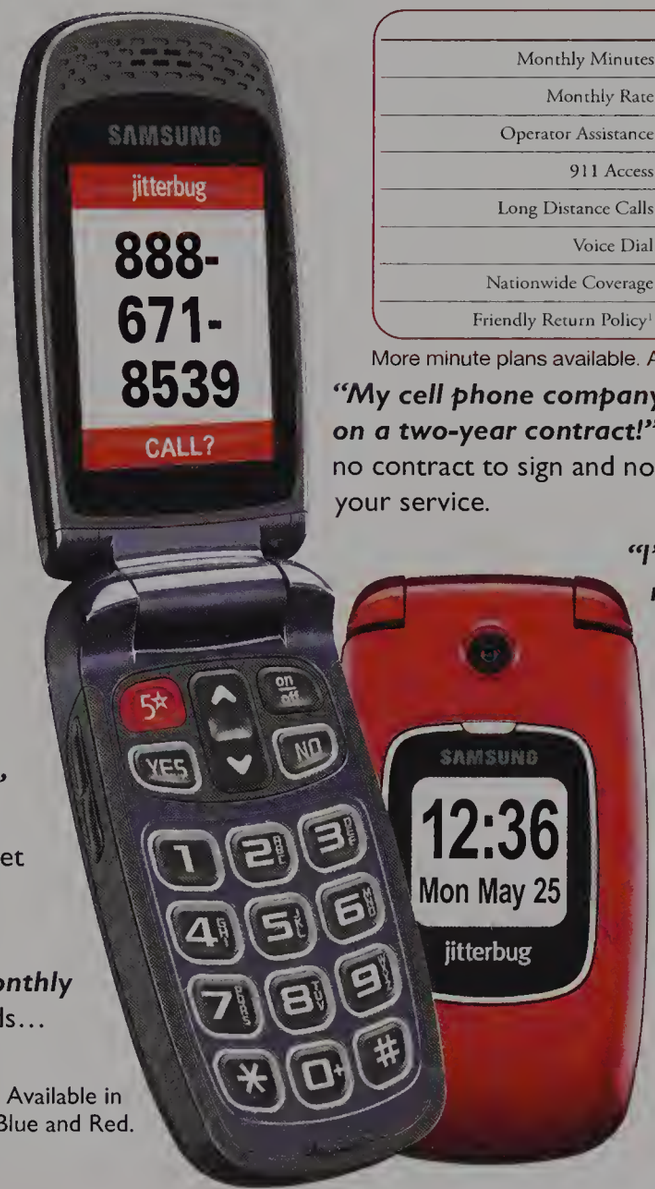

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- **Lowe's**, the world's second largest home improvement retailer, agreed to eliminate neonicotinoid pesticides — a leading contributor to global bee declines — from its stores by 2019.
- **Avon** agreed to review and revise its palm oil purchasing policies to address impacts on deforestation and human rights.
- **MeadWestvaco** agreed to full disclosure of its political contributions. Thanks to concerted efforts by investors, including Domini, nearly 140 large corporations now disclose their political spending so that they may be held accountable by their investors and consumers.

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